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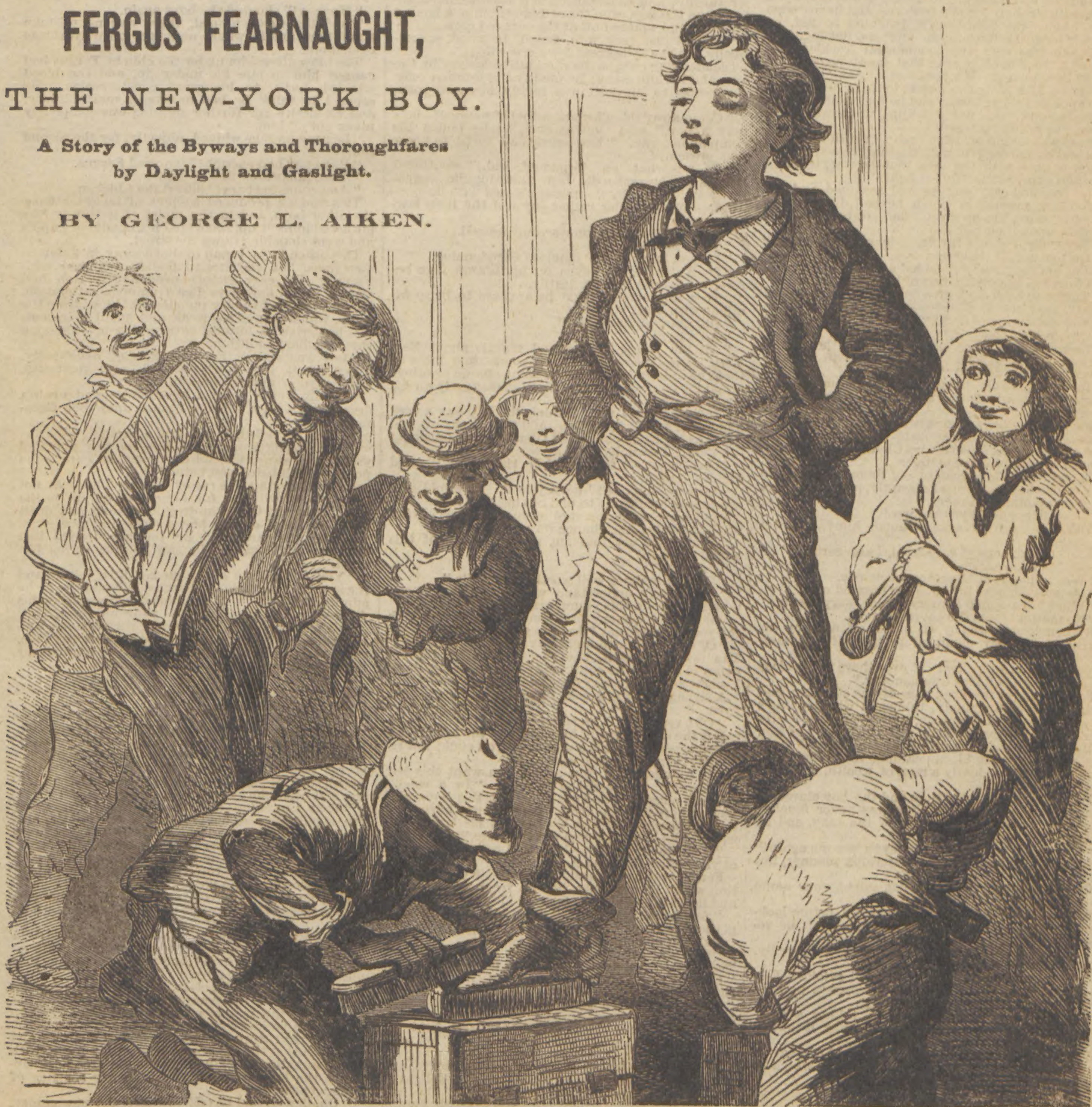
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FERGUS FEARNAUGHT, THE NEW-YORK BOY.

A Story of the Byways and Thoroughfares
by Daylight and Gaslight.

BY GEORGE L. AIKEN.



"SAIL IN, BUBBIES—GO TO WORK!" HE EXCLAIMED ENCOURAGINGLY TO THE BOOTBLACKS.

Fergus Fearnaught; THE NEW YORK BOY.

A Story of the Byways and Thoroughfares
by Daylight and Gaslight.

BY GEO. L. AIKEN.

CHAPTER I.

THE STREET ARABS.

It was a curious sight—one well calculated to attract the attention of the passer-by.

A group of boys—the *gamins*, or street arabs of New York city—was gathered at the junction of Chatham and William streets.

The object of this gathering was plainly perceptible in the central figure in the group.

This figure was a boy, who stood in a peculiar attitude. He had engaged the services of two boot-black boys, either with a view to expedition, or swayed by some eccentricity of his nature, and stood, something in the pose of the famed Colossus of Rhodes, on their two boxes, with one boy polishing his right boot, and the other his left.

The appearance of the boy was as peculiar as the attitude he had chosen. He had a frank and open face, with strongly defined features, and he wore his hair, which was light-brown, inclining to red, or what is termed auburn, quite long and flowing.

His skin was very white, somewhat freckled, and he had a color in his cheeks that many young girls would have envied. His nose was long and straight, his eyes a dark blue, the pupils looking like glittering sapphires set in ivory; and he had a small, well-shaped mouth, with finely cut lips, upon which decision was firmly stamped.

There was a kind of "don't care" air in the boy's face and a manner generally that impressed the beholder at once with the idea that he was, to use a common expression, "full of fight."

The free-and-easy pose he had assumed, and the patronizing manner in which he had directed the boys to "shine 'em up good," had not been without its effect upon their minds.

"Say, Cully, I shines fur der shiners. How are yer off fur der brads?" said one.

"Dat am de question," added a sable youth, who also followed the occupation of blacking boots.

"Take you both, and give you a five-cent nickel each!" cried the free-and-easy lad, in a very nonchalant manner, and he jingled the five-cent pieces merrily in his hand.

The music was very stimulating, for they set to work at once with a will, each emulous to outstrip the other in the desired "shine."

The novelty of the strange boy's position soon attracted a crowd of the boys who haunted that neighborhood.

Nor were the boys alone attracted by the peculiar position our hero had assumed. Two men paused, who were walking leisurely up Chatham street, conversing in an interested manner.

The moment the eyes of one of them fell upon the face of the boy he stopped abruptly, and exclaimed, in an involuntary manner:

"Good heavens! See that boy!"

"What is there remarkable about him? A street vagabond?"

"No common street vagabond, I am certain," returned his companion.

"Why?" inquired the other, curiously.

"Because he puts me so much in mind of—"

"Who?" demanded his companion, surprisedly.

"No matter!" was the short answer.

His companion was by no means offended by his curtness; he only chuckled to himself and muttered:

"As close as an oyster! If ever there was a close man that man is Rufus Glendenning."

Fergus caught the fixed gaze of the stranger, and returned it unflinchingly, taking in Glendenning's face and figure with a quick, searching glance. He saw a man, apparently some thirty-five years of age, with a tall, well-proportioned figure, and well-dressed, evincing in his appearance the possessor of ample means—evidently a man of wealth, and moving in good society.

For full a moment the man and the boy stared at each other, but Fergus's blue eyes never flinched beneath the searching scrutiny of the man, and he finally said:

"Guess you'll know me when you see me again!"

Glendenning smiled in a mysterious manner, but answered with great affability:

"I think it very likely. What might your name be, my boy?"

"I'm not your boy; my father was a better looking man than you are," replied Fergus, as if he resented the interest the stranger took in him.

"I dare say," returned Glendenning, unmovedly.

"But what was his name?"

"What would you give to know?" rejoined Fergus, thrusting his hands into his trousers pockets and winking saucily at Glendenning.

"This," answered Glendenning, taking a fifty-cent piece from his pocket and extending it toward the boy.

Fergus did not offer to take it; instead of that he burst into the words of an old Scotch song, which he sung with singular force and sweetness:

"Oh! what's his name,
And where's his hame,
I dinna care to tell!"

This snatch of melody had a marked effect upon Glendenning.

"The very tones of the voice are the same!" he muttered.

"I'll tell yer what his name is!" exclaimed a news-boy known as Rowdy Rube.

"Do so, and you shall have this," said Glendenning.

"His name is Fergus Fearnaught," cried Rowdy Rube, and he quickly secured the coveted coin.

"Oh, my heyes, but yer's a haul!" he added, delightedly.

He did not see the wrathful glance that Fergus shot at him; perhaps it would not have troubled him if he had.

"Fergus Fearnaught?" muttered Glendenning.

"That's an odd name. It cannot, surely, be his right name?"

"Why not?" demanded his companion, who, standing by his elbow, overheard these muttered words.

"He's odd enough to have any kind of an odd name."

These words, though not spoken in a very loud tone, reached the boy's ears, and, for the first time, drew his attention to this man.

"Hello! Why there's Pickles!" he exclaimed, in a ringing tone.

"How's shystering down to the Tombs, now, eh, Pickles?"

The personage thus addressed grew crimson in the face from the tip of his long nose to the roots of his sandy hair.

"How dare you, you devil's cub?" he exclaimed, wrathfully; and he advanced in a threatening manner upon the boy, who threw himself into a boxing attitude, and squared off at the enraged man.

"Hi! hi! just twig him, boys!" he cried, sarcastically.

"The little great lawyer is riled!"

Glendenning caught the diminutive lawyer by the arm and led him away; he made no resistance, only sputtering to himself in a highly incensed manner.

"Come away—don't make a fool of yourself—he's only a boy," said Glendenning, as he pulled his companion away.

"I've learned all I wish to know—at present."

"Phew! what an impudent cub!" sputtered Pickles, for he really did bear that singular cognomen; and he was by no means pleased with it.

Rufus Glendenning rather enjoyed the little lawyer's sputtering rage.

"The boy evidently knows you," he said.

"Yes," growled Pickles.

"Do you know him?" inquired Glendenning.

"I? No! never set eyes on his brazen face before," answered Pickles, testily.

"Then how comes it that he appears to be so familiar with you?"

"Oh! they all know me."

"All who?"

"All the young rogues and rascals about New York. They see me about the courts, and most of them have been hauled up on some charge or other.

Couldn't you see jail-bird written distinctly on his countenance?"

"Indeed I could not. I think the boy has a very handsome and striking face, and then, such an odd name as he has," continued Glendenning, musingly.

"Fergus Fearnaught!"

"Oh! bless you, that is not his right name!" cried Pickles, quickly.

"Do you think so?" he rejoined. "I would give something handsome to find out his true name."

Pickles became interested at once; he was always on the alert for any chance for profit.

"Could you not find out something about this *gamin* for me?"

"I might."

"I would make it well worth your while."

"But I don't understand what interest you can possibly take in this young arab," said Pickles.

"It is not necessary that you should. It is enough for you to know that I do take an interest in him."

"Of course; you thought he resembled—um—ah!"

The lawyer paused, but as Glendenning did not deign to answer, he continued: "some particular—I might say, some very dear friend of yours?"

A strange light gleamed from Glendenning's dark eyes.

"Oh! very dear!" he replied.

But the expression of his face, and the tone of his voice, made his words a puzzle, as you could not reconcile them with each other.

"If I understand you aright you want this boy shadowed?" resumed the lawyer.

"In a week's time I'll engage to find out all about this boy—who he is, where he came from, where he was born, how long he has lived in New York, what his true name is, and who his father and mother were."

"Very good. In a week's time I will call upon you at your office," and so they parted.

Fergus was by no means pleased with the information which Rowdy Rube had so freely volunteered, and he took him to task for it in his impulsive way.

"See here, you, Rube," he cried, "you're altogether too fresh."

Rube laughed disdainfully.

"Oh! am I?" he returned, in a bullying tone.

Then he turned to the group of boys, remarking: "Look at the little bantam rooster! Ain't he putting on frills?"

"I'll put a frill on you!" exclaimed Fergus, menacingly.

"Oh! will you? Here, you, Ikey! jest hold my papers while I wallop this rooster out of his new-blacked boots."

Ikey took the bundle of papers with alacrity, and the other boys burst into exclamations of delight at the prospect of a fight.

Those in the crowd who sympathized with Fergus trembled for the result.

"Cut and run," advised Ben Gummy, the fiddler boy. "He is big enough to eat you."

"Not much!" responded Fergus. "He can't get away with me as easy as he thinks. I'll knock the spots out of him in five minutes."

And he boldly awaited the attack of Rowdy Rube. This youth plunged forward with his head down, something after the fashion of an enraged bull.

Expecting his opponent to fly without resistance, he did not keep a very sharp look-out ahead. In consequence of this, his fists went on either side of Fergus's head without touching it, and he received a blow under the chin that made his teeth rattle in his jaws and sent him to the sidewalk in a sitting posture, where he gave utterance to a dismal howl—a howl in which surprise, rage and pain were strangely blended.

"Hooray!" shouted the boys, delightedly.

This first repulse of the bully sent all their sympathy over to Fergus.

"I'll fix you for that!" howled Rowdy Rube.

He gathered himself hastily up and made another and more desperate plunge at Fergus, who stepped lightly aside, thrust out his foot, tripped up Rube, and sent him sprawling in the gutter.

Rube was completely demoralized by this second overthrow. As he attempted to rise he saw Fergus standing over him.

"Lemme up!" he whined.

CHAPTER II.

A YOUNG BLOOD.

"HOORAY!" shouted the boys again.

The bully was whipped, there was no mistake about that, and he would no longer dare tyrannize over them.

The blow given him under the chin by Fergus had caused him to bite his under lip, and the blood trickled forth, to his great consternation. He seemed to think he had received a mortal injury, and all desire for further fighting was completely taken out of him.

"Lemme up!" he whined, abjectly, for the second time.

"Have you had enough?" inquired Fergus.

"Yes," answered Rowdy Rob.

"And some to spare!" added the Chicken.

This remark produced a shout of laughter from the other boys, and in the midst of it Rowdy Rob gathered himself up, recovered his bundle of papers and went slouching down the street.

The other boys began to move away in different directions, but the Italian fiddler remained with Fergus. His easy victory over Rowdy Rob had greatly raised Fergus in Ben Gummy's estimation.

He had received sundry punches and kicks from the bully, which he was too weak and small to resent, and he derived a natural satisfaction in witnessing that summary punishment.

"Dat was goot!" he told Fergus, delightedly.

"You knock him down goot—oh, my! furst-rate. Hit him some more de next times!"

"I'll hit you!" cried a harsh voice, and a ratan descended, with a slashing sound, upon Ben Gummy's back.

"Yah!" he yelled, in pain and affright.

"You lazy little whelp! is this the way you fool your time away, instead of trying to earn some pennies? I'll teach you better!"

Again the ratan was raised, but the blow was not given the second time, for Fergus sprang upon the man, wrenched the ratan from his grasp, and dealt him a couple of cutting blows across the face.

"Take you care—it is de padrone!" cried Ben Gummy, warningly, as he saw Fergus spring forward.

"You coward, to strike such a little fellow, and for nothing!" exclaimed Fergus, indignantly, as he administered the cuts, with all the strength of his vigorous young arm, upon the padrone's face.

This padrone was a small-sized, wiry-framed Italian, past middle life, with a bearded, swarthy face, somewhat sinister in expression. His features by no means evinced an amiable disposition.

Never was a man more astonished than he was by Fergus's unexpected attack, and his rage was equal to his astonishment.

"Maledizione!" he sputtered; for though he could speak very good English ordinarily, he always expressed himself in his native tongue when enraged.

Then he drew forth a keen-bladed knife from some secret pocket and sprang toward Fergus, with a murderous intent gleaming from his small, glittering and bead-like eyes.

"Take you care!" cried Ben Gummy, who knew the significance of this action; it was not the first time he had seen a drawn knife in the padrone's hand; and then he took to his heels and ran away, leaving Fergus at the mercy of the enraged Italian.

But Fergus never thought of flying; he doubled up his fists and faced the padrone boldly.

Well had he been given the name of Fearnaught, for the thought of fear appeared to be unknown to him.

His bravery, however, would have availed him but little in this emergency where the odds were so much against him, if aid had not come to him in a most unexpected manner.

"Stop that!" cried a clear, youthful voice, and its owner enforced the command by rapping the padrone over the knuckles of his right hand with the little gutta-percha cane he carried.

These raps were given with such quickness and precision that the padrone dropped his knife, with an exclamation of pain, and then he stood grimacing at the boys and swearing furiously a string of Italian oaths.

"Oh, dry up and be off!" advised the new-comer, in a peremptory manner; and he shifted his cane in

his hand, giving full play to its ball-shaped, lead-loaded top.

This action was not lost upon the padrone, nor the appearance and good clothes of his new opponent.

He quickly stooped, recovered his knife and rat-an, flung a parting oath at the boys, and then shuffled down the street.

"The macaroni-eater has beat a retreat!" cried the new-comer, laughingly.

"Bully for you!" cried Fergus, thanking his new friend with an admiring glance from his bright, honest blue eyes.

The other boy surveyed him curiously.

"You're a likely chap!" he cried, after he had taken this survey.

"You're another!" returned Fergus, cordially.

"What's your name?"

"Fergus Fearnaught. What's yours?"

"Clinton De Witt Stuyvesant."

"Oh, you belong to the big bugs!"

Indeed there was the stamp of a long and gentle lineage upon Clinton Stuyvesant's handsome face. He was Fergus's senior by a twelvemonth, his age being sixteen, while Fergus appeared to be but fifteen, despite the precocious look of wisdom on his face.

Slowly the two boys sauntered up the street, side by side, going toward the Bowery, and at every step Fergus's admiration of his new friend increased. He was charmed by his easy, nonchalant manner, and the genial expression of his handsome face. This admiration found vent, in his usual impulsive manner, in the forcible exclamation of:

"You're some!"

Clinton's careless eyes assumed an expression of surprise.

"Eh?" he cried, interrogatorily. "Some what?"

"One of the boys!" explained Fergus.

Clinton laughed, in his careless, good-natured way.

"You can gamble on that," he replied, "'Go it while you're young,' that's my motto."

"I'd like to go it, too," said Fergus.

"Can't you?"

"No," and he sighed regretfully.

Clinton took a cursory survey of him, and rejoined:

"I suppose not; haven't got much to go it with?"

"No. Your dad's got the rocks, hasn't he?"

"Lots of 'em."

"That's nice. I wish I had a rich dad."

And again Fergus sighed regretfully. He was not naturally of an envious disposition, but he could not help contrasting his position in life with that of Clinton Stuyvesant. He would have been less than human if he had not done so.

"What does your dad do?" inquired Clinton, evincing a sluggish kind of curiosity in his companion.

"I haven't got any?"

"Dead, eh?"

"Yes, and mother too."

"Oh!" exclaimed Clinton, in real sympathy.

"Lost 'em both—how long ago?"

A troubled look came upon Fergus's face.

"I don't know," he replied.

Clinton looked surprised.

"Don't know when they died—too young to remember, eh?" he asked.

"If I was put on a stand like I have seen them do it in the Tombs, and told to hold up my right hand, or kiss a gilt cross on the Bible, as some do, I could not swear that I ever had a father or mother," replied Fergus; and he said this in a dogged kind of a fashion, as if he felt aggrieved by being obliged to make this admission.

"Well, that's queer!" Clinton exclaimed. "Did you never see your father nor mother?"

"Not that I can remember."

Clinton looked bewildered.

"But you must have had a father and a mother!" he cried; "everybody has. You couldn't get into the world without 'em, you know! But it's queer that you never saw them. You live here, don't you, in the city?"

"Yes; I'm stopping now with Mrs. Nandrus and Fleda, in Baxter street."

"Mrs. Nandrus; who's she?"

"A poor woman; she does washing for a living; she don't know much, but Fleda is awful smart."

"Who's Fleda?"

"Her daughter."

"Nice girl, eh?"

"Very."

"And pretty?"

"Real pretty."

"Ah! guess I'll drop in and see you some day; might give you a lift, you know. Where can I find you?"

"On the first floor."

"Where's the house?"

"Between Grand and Hester. I'll tell you how you can find it."

Fergus gave him a full description of the location of the house.

"There comes a car that goes up my way. Ta, ta, my boy! Remember, you've a friend in Clint Stuyvesant!"

He ran lightly toward a Madison-avenue car, leaped upon the rear platform, turned and waved his hand to Fergus, and the car rolled swiftly away with him.

CHAPTER III.

RAGGED TERRY.

Fergus, leaning on the curbstone watching the car until it disappeared in the distance.

"He's a splendid fellow!" he murmured to himself. "His father must be awful rich. It's a nice thing to have a rich father; but I'll never have one now. I wonder who I belong to, anyway?"

"Pears to me if a mother had a nice, likely boy, like I am, she wouldn't go back on him. Pears to me she wouldn't send him to the poor-house, where they half starve a fellow, and beat him if he grumbled about it. When I get big enough I'll go back and whale that overseer."

He had begun to move slowly up the Bowery, dodging the hurrying throng as he made these reflections, when he saw a pocket handkerchief lying on the sidewalk before him. He stooped quickly and picked it up.

Looking ahead of him he espied a well-dressed lady, and thinking that she had dropped the handkerchief he ran after her.

Just as he broke into this run a cry of "Stop thief!" was uttered behind him. Fergus, in his anxiety to overtake the lady and restore her property to her did not heed this cry.

The surging crowd swept around him and hid her from his view. As he darted in and out in his efforts to overtake the lady, the cry was repeated and taken up by several voices, "Stop thief! Stop thief! Stop thief!"

Fergus was very naturally mistaken for the thief, and several hands were thrust forth to catch him, but he glided away from them with the suppleness of an eel; he was not long in recognizing the situation.

"By Jinks!" he muttered to himself, "they think I've stole the handkerchief, and they are after me. This will never do. Let her whistle for her handkerchief. She'll thin: I picked her pocket, just as like as not. Nobody believes poor people can be honest."

He thrust the handkerchief hurriedly into his pocket, stopped and joined in the hue and cry, bawling as lustily as any of them: "Stop thief! Stop thief!"

Then, singling out a stout, stolid-faced Dutchman in the crowd, he shouted:

"There he is—that's him! Stop him!"

The Dutchman was instantly seized by the overzealous mob, and during the altercation that ensued, Fergus quietly walked away, turned into Bond street, and directed his progress toward Broadway.

"They can jug the Dutchman, if they want to," he told himself, with a chuckle, "but they can't catch me—I'm too wide awake for them! I'll take the handkerchief home and give it to Fleda. What's the use of a poor cove trying to be honest when everybody takes him for a thief?"

Having come to this conclusion, Fergus paused on the corner of Broadway, and leaning against the lamp-post, gazed at the stream of vehicles which rolled continuously down that busy thoroughfare.

Suddenly a scream burst from the open window of a private carriage, and Fergus, attracted by the sound, saw a woman's head thrust from the window, and her right arm was held toward him, the hand gesticulating in an agitated manner, and he heard her cry out:

"That is he—the boy—there!"

He could not mistake her action; she meant him, beyond a doubt. He cast one wild, startled glance at her, and muttering: "By Jinks! I'm in for it again!" turned and fled precipitately.

"Oh! stop—stop!" came after him, in an agonized cry, but Fergus only redoubled his speed.

The block between Broadway and the Bowery is but a short one, and before the driver could stop his horses and turn the carriage around into Bond street, the fleet-footed boy had disappeared.

Fergus was too familiar with the turns and windings of New York to be easily overtaken, and he knew that the moment he mingled with the ever-moving throng upon the Bowery he was safe; so he dashed along at all speed until he reached the corner, turned into the Bowery, and subsided into a walk.

"Phew!" he puffed, drawing a long breath. "Who put up that job on me, I wonder? That couldn't have been the woman that lost the handkerchief—she belonged over here, and the other was a Broadway big-bug, and a real nobby one, too, riding in her own carriage, with a driver in livery—and such a handsome face. Oh, by Jinks! if the angels are any prettier than she is they must look stunning! But what did she want with me?"

It was utterly impossible that this woman in the carriage could have been the one who had dropped the handkerchief. Besides, if it was really the woman who had lost the handkerchief, how could she possibly know that he had found it?

"It just beats all!" he told himself. "I never did nothing to her—I know I never did; then what did she want to have me caught for? Guess she must have mistook me for somebody else. Lord, yes—that's it—what a ninny I was never to have thought of that before."

His reflections upon this subject had so preoccupied his mind that he had reached the corner of Grand and Baxter streets almost unconsciously, but the turnings that led to his present home were so familiar to him that his feet took that direction almost of their own volition.

Clustered on the sidewalk in front of the dingy brick house, where he had found a shelter, and which was let in different apartments, like all the dwellings in the street, so that every house was a hive of humanity, was a group of noisy, ragged boys, engaged in a game of "marbles;" and the noisiest and raggedest of them all was a diminutive youngster, who could not have been over ten years of age, though his face was as sharp and shrewd-looking as that of a man of forty. Indeed, he looked like one of those "changeling" children that we of read in Irish legends, where the body is that of an infant, but the face is that of a man.

No scarecrow in a farmer's field ever had more rags fluttering in the breeze than did this young-

ster. Looking at them you wondered how he ever got them on him, and having got them on, how he contrived to keep them there.

"There's Ragged Terry," commented Fergus, as he beheld the group. "He and his gang are playing marbles on our sidewalk again. Fleda will be after them presently."

Fergus chuckled to himself, paused, and watched the game. Then a window in the third story is gently opened, and a small, curly black head is cautiously protruded. A pair of bright, black eyes survey the noisy group below, and then a tin kettle, of three quarts' capacity, is reached forth and turned upside down, and the head and kettle disappear quickly within the window.

Swish-swash! down comes the water in a deluge on the boys. Just at that moment their heads were all together, for Ragged Terry was "knocking down" for a shot and a strong suspicion that he will cheat pervades his dreams, for Terry's propensity is well-known to them, and none escape the extemporized shower-bath.

They hastily gather up their marbles and scamper over to the other sidewalk, where they cluster together, shake the drops from them, wonder where they came from and swearing like pirates—and pirates and robbers they will undoubtedly grow up to be, and the trial of one of them, for the inevitable crime he must commit, will cost New York more than to take the whole of them, just as they are now, and educate them in some reform school.

"That's Fleda, and she has ducked them," cried Fergus.

Ragged Terry was about to take off his coat and defy some one to fight, but he desisted when he saw Fergus.

"Sides, Cullies!" he said. "There's bully Fergus, the Fearnought."

"Be off!" exclaimed Fergus. "You have no business here—and you have been told so often enough."

"You be blowed!" cried Terry, defiantly. "You don't own the street."

Terry, however, was careful to keep at a safe distance while he made this remark, watching Fergus keenly with his twinkling eyes, which were as sharp and as bright as those of a mouse.

Fergus made a feint to cross the street.

"Mizzel!" cried Terry, warningly. "He's a-comin' fur us!"

And the ragged crowd scuttled rapidly away, following the lead of Terry.

Fergus laughed as the boys scampered away, and then turned and entered the house. In the hall he met a girl holding a tin pail in her hand. She had just come down-stairs.

"Hallo! Fergus!" she called out to him in a shrill, clear voice. "Didn't I duck 'em good!"

"You just did."

The girl broke into a merry laugh, the mirth coming as spontaneously from her lips as song from the throat of a bird.

"I knew I could make them scatter, and a little water won't hurt any of them," she said. "I guess if that little ragamuffin Terry once had his face washed, good and clean, his own mother wouldn't know him."

She opened the door that led into the apartment on the ground floor, stepping down a step to enter it, and Fergus followed her, closing the door after him.

It is not to be wondered at that Fergus had taken a great liking to this lightsome creature.

Finding her in Mulberry street annoyed by three rude boys, he had, with the natural chivalry of his nature, constituted himself her champion. His interference was regarded with derision by the young rowdies, but when one was tripped up and sent sprawling, and another got a black eye, and the third a bloody nose, like Tom, the piper's son, they went howling down the street, fully convinced that they had caught a Tartar.

In this way Fergus made the acquaintance of Fleda. He walked home with her—it was a home, despite its poverty, as Fergus found to his satisfaction. She questioned him concerning himself with more than her usual curiosity, and that trait was strongly developed in Fleda Nandrus's composition.

She found him very non-communicative at first, however—shy and suspicious even of her. He told her his name was Fergus. "Fergus what?" she questioned. He did not know; up country, where he came from, he had been called Fergus, but nothing else. Fleda considered this very strange, and so did Fergus then, though he had given it very little thought before.

"You ought to have another name," she told him.

"Everybody has two names."

"I suppose so," answered Fergus, indifferently.

"If you don't know what your right name is, why don't you call yourself something else?" she suggested.

"I'll take any name you've a mind to pick out," said Fergus, rather pleased to be spared the trouble of choosing for himself.

"You're awful brave!" cried Fleda, "and you ought to have some other name that would tell people so—something that would sound nice."

"They called me a young 'dare-devil' at the almshouse. How would that do?"

Fleda gave a little scream of dismay.

"Dare-devil! Good Lord, no!" she cried. "That would never do. You are not afraid of anything, are you?"

Fergus gave his head a proud toss that floated his flaxen hair, something after the fashion of a lion throwing back his mane.

"Not much," he answered. "I don't scare worth a cent. I stopped a runaway horse the other day."

and the gentleman that owned him gave me a dollar, and told me I was a 'fearnaught,' whatever that is."

Fleda clapped her hands delightedly together. "That's it!" she exclaimed. "Fergus Fearnaught!"

And so she gave him his name—a name that he was destined to bear through long years of varied adventures and experiences such as fall to the lot of few mortals.

"That was a cute dodge of yours, Fleda," observed Fergus, laughing over the recollection of the ducking scene. "They couldn't tell where the water came from."

"I'll warm it for 'em, and give it to 'em hot the next time!" cried Fleda.

Her animosity toward the boys appeared to be very strong.

"Oh, I wouldn't do that," remonstrated Fergus. "I wouldn't scald the poor cusses."

"I'm sure they deserve it!"

"P'raps they do; but that would make 'em mad, and they'd throw stones and break all your windows."

Fleda felt the force of this remark; such a retaliation would be unpleasant.

"P'raps they might," she admitted. "But they are a dreadful nuisance. Oh! I do wish we could move away from this neighborhood! There's nothing but beggars and thieves around here."

"But there's none in this house!" cried Fergus, quickly.

Fleda's black eyebrows were arched in a very expressive manner.

"Oh! isn't there?" she rejoined. "Don't you be too sure of that! What's that tall man, who lives on the upper floor, who's out all night, and home all day—John Jackson, they say his name is, but who knows whether it is or not? Who knows anything about him, or what he does, anyway?"

"Why, you don't mean to say that he is—"

Fleda clapped her hand quickly over Fergus's mouth.

"Hush!" she cried, warmly. "He might be going through the hall and overhear us talking about him, and come in here to-night, when we are asleep, and wring both our necks for us."

"He'll find me a tough chicken, if he troubles me!" cried Fergus, stoutly. "I ain't afraid of any man's black looks. But, never mind him; he won't trouble us if we don't trouble him. Where's your mother?"

"This is one of her days out, and she hasn't got home yet. You didn't come home for any dinner. Where have you been all day?"

"Down by Courtlandt ferry."

"Did you get any job?" inquired Fleda, with interest.

"Yes, two."

"How much did you earn?"

"Fifty cents."

"Oh, my! but you have been lucky to-day!" she exclaimed, delightedly.

"I just have. I carried a valise for a gentleman up to French's Hotel, and he gave me a sandwich he got coming on the train and didn't eat, and that made my dinner; and when I got to the hotel there was a gent just ready to go to the ferry, and he had a carpet-bag he wanted carried, and so I cut it both ways—got a quarter from each. So I let the boys black my boots, just to show how flush I was."

"Lord, what extravagance! Your pride will be the ruin of you yet, Fergus."

She shook the forefinger of her right hand at him, reprovingly.

CHAPTER IV.

FLEDA'S BRIGHT IDEA.

Fergus laughed at Fleda's reproof.

"Guess not," he returned, lightly. "I like to spread myself a little when I get a chance. What's the use of being a fellow unless you are some of a fellow? Ah, wouldn't I like to be as well off as Clint Stuyvesant! He's the boy that can put on the frills, and starch 'em up to the nines, too!"

Fleda opened her bright black eyes widely at this eulogistic speech.

"Clint Stuyvesant!" she cried. "Why, who's he? I never heard you speak of him before."

This question led Fergus to explain how he had made the acquaintance of that scion of the Knickerbockers who bore the sounding and time-honored names of Clinton De Witt Stuyvesant.

Fleda shook her young head gravely as she listened to Fergus's account of his adventure. It did not appear so funny to her as it did to him.

"You'll get killed yet, Fergus, see if you don't!" she exclaimed.

"Not a bit of it. What's the use of living if you don't have some sport?" he returned.

Then he broke into a song, which was popular among the boys, singing a snatch of it with surprising sweetness and melody:

"So let the wide world wag as it will,
I'll be gay and happy still;
Gay and happy—gay and happy—
I'll be gay and happy still!"

Fleda, kneeling before the little square stove and arranging her kindlings, looked up admiringly at the boy.

"Oh, my, Fergus! but you do just sing splendidly! Where did you learn?"

Fergus laughed gleefully.

"I never learnt anywhere," he answered. "It just comes to me naturally, as it does to the birds. Why, you can sing as well as I can, and how did you learn?"

"Mother learned me when I was a baby; least-ways I picked it up from hearing her."

Fergus's sunny face clouded.

"I never had any mother to sing to me," he said.

"You can't remember your mother?"

"No," answered Fergus, with a reflective shake of the head. "Pears to me that I never had any." "Oh, nonsense!" cried Fleda, laughing. "That couldn't be so, you know. There, the fire's going; now wait till I fill the tea-kettle and then I'll tell you my idea. I have been thinking that I would like to do something to earn my own living."

"Show! 'pears to me that you do enough. Why, don't you do all the housework while your mother goes out to wash?"

"Of course I do that, but Lord! how long does that take? I have lots of time besides. I want to do something that will bring in the money."

"Yes, that's what we are all after. Every fellow is on the make—I am myself."

"But some days you don't make anything."

"That's so."

"You depend on what odd jobs you can pick up; now, wouldn't it be much better if you had a regular business?"

Fergus opened his eyes at this.

"A regular business!" he cried. "What kind of a regular business?"

"A peanut stand," answered Fleda, with the air of one achieving a triumph.

"A peanut stand?" echoed Fergus.

"Yes, I've heard mother say that lots of old women get their living that way," continued Fleda, with enthusiasm.

Fergus did not share in this enthusiasm.

"There's lots of 'em, I know," he said, "down the Bowery and around the City Hall, but I don't know how much they make."

"But they must make something or they wouldn't keep at it," urged Fleda.

Fergus felt the force of this argument.

"That's so," he admitted.

Fleda was encouraged by this admission.

"Don't you think it is a good idea?" she asked.

"It might be," he replied, a little dubiously.

"Where could you start it?"

"On the corner of Grand street, on this side of the way. I've had my eye on that corner for some time," replied Fleda, vivaciously. "I can take that old table in the corner there, mother can spare it, and the chair without a back, that I do my washing on. I can start small in the first place, you know."

"Couldn't you get some money from your mother?"

"No, Fergus," she answered, quickly; "and what's more, I don't want to. I wouldn't ask her for the world. No, I want to do it without her help—it must be done by you and I alone, Fergus, or not at all."

"All right! then we'll do it. I'll start out bright and early to-morrow morning, and hunt up jobs. I'll raise the money somehow. Oh! by jinks! there's one way I've just thought of."

"What is that?" she inquired eagerly.

"I might get it from Clint Stuyvesant."

"Do you think you could?"

"Why not? He must have loads of money! Why, a dollar to me ain't more than a five-cent piece to him. I'll ask him to lend it to me, and I'll bet he will."

"Well, there would be no harm in asking him; he can't more than refuse, and we could soon pay it back to him."

"Of course. I'll hunt him up to-morrow. And now—Hullo! Who's that, I wonder?"

This inquiry was caused by a loud knock at the door of the sitting-room.

"Some peddler," answered Fleda. "Go and send him away."

Fergus went to the door of the sitting-room, opened it, and found Effingham H. Pickles standing in the hall in front of it, and this astute lawyer grinned at him in a most affable manner.

"Hullo, Pickles!" exclaimed Fergus, in great surprise.

"Mr. Pickles, if you please—there's a handle to my name," said the lawyer; and he crowded Fergus back into the room and closed the door. "Draw it mild, my bold Fergus, alias the Fearnaught. 'Familiarity breeds contempt.' Always pay proper respect to your elders and betters. Aha! not so badly fixed here after all. Might have been worse—yes, decidedly worse!"

"What brought you here?" demanded Fergus, belligerently.

Pickles smiled upon him in a patronizing manner. "I might be facetious and reply my legs, my bulky boy," he made answer, "but I will not indulge in unnecessary irrelevancy. I came to see you."

Having thus spoken, Pickles seated himself in the rocking-chair, crossed one leg over the other, began to nurse his hat upon his knee, and nodded benevolently at Fergus.

Fleda put her head in at the door leading to the kitchen.

"What did you ask him in for?" she cried, sharply.

"I didn't ask him in; he walked in without asking," replied Fergus.

Fleda bounced into the room, confronted Pickles, and exclaimed, shrilly:

"Well, drat your impudence!"

"Fergus, my boy, is this your sister?" inquired Pickles, composedly.

"No, she is not," he answered, shortly.

"But I'm just as good!" cried Fleda, quickly.

The lawyer took a keen and comprehensive survey of the features of the boy and girl as they stood side by side before him.

"Not the slightest resemblance between them, not the faintest shadow of a family likeness there," he told himself. "They are as unlike as chalk and cheese. The boy is a wulf, undoubtedly, who has

found shelter here. Now for a little judicious cross-examination to elicit the truth." Then he said aloud:

"I have come here in a most friendly spirit, entirely for your good—entirely. Just listen to me, my brave boy, and answer to the best of your knowledge and ability a few questions that I am about to put you, and it may be the best thing that ever happened to you."

Fergus surveyed him doubtfully.

This vague announcement of future good did not have a dazzling effect upon his mind. Fleda shared in his doubts of the little lawyer's friendliness.

"Don't you tell him anything, Fergus!" she cried, in her sharp way.

"Don't be so vinegary, my nut-brown, black-eyed damsel," said Pickles, insinuatingly. "What a sharp little gipsy you are, to be sure."

"She's up to snuff, and so am I," rejoined Fergus, significantly.

"Ah, yes, undoubtedly," answered Pickles, with his oily chuckle. "You've been kind of knocking round the world, getting more kicks than pennies, ever since you can remember, eh, my bold Fergus?"

"I just have," replied the boy.

"Ah! no friends to help you along?"

"None but Fleda, here, and her mother."

"Ah, yes, I see; you were a stranger, and they took you in. Good, very good! Where did you come from?"

Fergus did not answer this question. Pickles played carelessly with his watch-chain, and scrutinized the boy covertly for a moment.

"Ah, you don't want to tell?" he continued, after a short silence.

"No," replied Fergus, decidedly.

"Why not?" insinuated Pickles.

"Cause I don't!" rejoined Fergus, doggedly.

"Ah, a very good reason, but not sufficiently explicit. You must have some reason for being so close about yourself."

"P'raps I have."

"What is it?"

"What's that to you?"

Pickles was by no means offended by this plump rejoinder.

"More than you may imagine, my bold Fergus," he answered. "I have taken quite an interest in you. I might give you a start in life that would send you a considerable distance on the high-road to fortune. I might put you in the way of earning your living a great deal easier than you do now."

"Oh, we are going to earn our own living!" cried Fleda, quickly. "All we want to start us is a dollar, and Fergus is going to borrow that from Clint—"

Fergus put his hand over her mouth and stopped her.

"Hush up!" he exclaimed, vexedly. "What do you want to tell him that for?"

"Where's the harm?" sputtered Fleda, breaking away from him.

"You keep quiet!"

"I will," answered Fleda, submissively. She began to think that she had been rather too communicative. "But I didn't say nothing to hurt," she added, deprecatingly.

Pickles chuckled.

"Of course you didn't," he said; "on the contrary, what you have said will produce the capital you require to embark in the business you contemplate." He took out his pocket-book and selected a crisp one-dollar bill from its contents. "See here, now, Fergus, my boy; answer me half a dozen questions, to the best of your knowledge and belief, and I will give you this dollar."

Fergus's eyes glistened for a moment, but the next he shook his head doggedly. Fleda trembled excitedly; the bribe appealed more strongly to her than to Fergus.

"Oh, take it—take it—it's just what we want!" she cried, eagerly. "If you haven't done any wrong, he can't do you any hurt."

"On the contrary, I might do you considerable good," urged Pickles, seeing that Fergus was irresolute. "Who knows but what I might put you in the way of finding a rich father?"

Fergus's face flushed, and he quivered in every limb.

"A rich father!" he murmured, in pleasurable anticipation; and then his face clouded, and he shook his head gravely. "My father's dead," he said.

"How do you know he is?" questioned Pickles, artfully. "Did you see him die?"

"No."

"Then what makes you think that he is dead?"

"Because he would have looked out for me if he had been alive. I should have had a home as Fleda has here," replied Fergus.

"Ah! you are too young to understand what strange things happen in this world, my boy. People don't always get what belongs to them; there's a good deal of trickery and rascality at work all the time, and we lawyers know more about it than any body else."

"I'll bet you do!" returned Fergus.

Pickles chuckled.

"You're sharp," he replied. "I wouldn't mind taking you in my office, and making a lawyer out of you. I want a boy—one about your size and age. Come, what do you say?"

"No," replied Fergus.

"I will give you three dollars a week—that's more than you can pick up by odd jobs, on an average. Eh? think it over."

"No," answered Fergus, again; "I don't want to be a lawyer; I don't believe in lawyers, anyway."

"No," he's going into business with me," said Fleda; "and so we'll take the dollar, and he'll answer your questions." She quickly possessed her-

self of the dollar, and then added to Fergus: "You must tell him, now, because I've got the money."

Fergus looked a little annoyed, but he appeared to accept Fleda's action as binding on himself.

"Aha!" chuckled Pickles. "Sharp practice that. You'll do, Fleda! You have more reason than he has, which is not generally the case—it oftener goes *vice versa*. Now, my bold Fergus, tell the truth—you don't know what may come of it."

"Did that dark man, that took such a good look at me, send you here to find out all you could about me?" asked Fergus, quickly.

The suddenness of this question threw Pickles off his guard.

"Eh? ah! no—why should you think so?" he stammered.

"He did!" cried Fergus, with decision.

"Umph—umph! what if he did?" rejoined Pickles, satisfied that he could not now drive this idea from the boy's brain. "Do you know him—did you ever see him before?"

"Never," answered Fergus, positively.

Pickles looked disappointed.

"Ah! I didn't know but what he might have been known to you," he said, musingly.

"You don't think he is my father?" cried Fergus, scornfully.

"Oh, no, no, not certainly not—certainly not. To my certain knowledge he is a bachelor—has never been married, and, besides, he's rather young to be the father of so old a boy as you are. By the way, how old are you?"

"I don't know exactly; I suppose I'm about fifteen."

"Yes, yes, there or thereabouts, I should say, though there's no telling within a year or two; and when a youngster is thrown on his own resources, as you have been, his face gets older than his body. Do you know where you were born?"

"No."

"Have you any idea?"

Fergus shook his head.

"No; I can't tell you," he replied. "It 'pears to me, sometimes, that I was born here in New York, and then I think I must have been born up-country."

"Up-country, eh?"

"Yes."

"That's rather vague. How far up?"

"Never you mind; I'm not going to tell you that!" replied Fergus, in that dogged way that he was in the habit of assuming.

"Oh, come, come, a bargain's a bargain!" expostulated Pickles. "You've taken the money."

"You can take it back," answered Fergus, indifferently.

"No, he sha'n't!" cried Fleda. "He came from Rockland county, near the lake."

"You hush up!" exclaimed Fergus.

"For the Lord's sake, where's the harm?" remonstrated Fleda. "You think they'll come after you, but I tell you, as I have often told you before, that they won't—they are only too glad to have the boys run away—then the town don't have to support them any longer."

"Aha! so you were in the county poor-house, and they half-starved you until you ran away to New York, eh?" questioned Pickles.

"Lordee!" ejaculated Fleda, surprisedly, "but you are good at guessing."

"You're good at blabbing!" exclaimed Fergus.

"It was easy enough for him to guess that after what you told him." He turned defiantly to Pickles, adding: "Now you know it, what are you going to do about it?"

Pickles chuckled in his customary manner.

"Whatever I do will result in your good, my boy, you may be assured of that," he answered. "It may be that I shall find a father for you and mother too; and rich ones at that, for there's good blood in your veins, or I am very much mistaken. How long is it since you ran away from the poor-house?"

"Five years."

"And you came right down here?"

"Yes."

"How did you get here?"

"Worked my passage in a lumber schooner."

"How long have you lived with your little friend Fleda here?"

"Six months."

Pickles evinced some surprise at this.

"Is that all?" he inquired.

"Yes."

"Have you any idea who put you in the poor-house?"

"No; they said nobody ever came to inquire for me, and they guessed that everybody that belonged to me was dead."

"What name did you go by there?"

"Fergus."

"Was that all?"

"Yes."

"You were never called by any other name?"

"No."

"Where did you get the Fearnaught from?"

"I gave it to him!" cried Fleda, quickly.

"You! How was that?"

Fleda explained volubly.

Pickles arose to take his departure.

"Very good—very good!" he said. "You have earned the dollar; and remember there is always a situation open for you in my office. You know where it is, eh? There's a sign at the door—'Effingham H. Pickles, Attorney-at-law'—you've seen it, eh? Neat but not gaudy. Come round and see me any time."

Pickles opened the door, entered the passage, and emerged into the street.

Very satisfactory—very! he muttered to himself as he walked along. "There's a history con-

nect-

nected with that boy or Glendenning would not be so anxious about him. Well, I've got my finger in the pie, and if there's any plums in it I'm bound to have some.

CHAPTER V.

AN ADVENTURE ON THE HUDSON.

AFTER due deliberation, and a consultation with Mrs. Nandrus, Fleda and Fergus invested the dollar received from Lawyer Pickles in peanuts, apples, cakes and candy, and the stand was established on the corner of Grand street, Fleda taking charge.

Fergus, not considering his presence necessary at the stand, after he had seen Fleda all prepared for business, went in quest of jobs, as was his custom.

The piers and ferries were his favorite resorts. The day became excessively sultry, not a breath of air appearing to fan the heated atmosphere of the city.

He went along by the different piers until he came to the Atlanta boat club-house at the foot of Christopher street.

Here he went out to the end of the pier.

The day grew warmer and warmer.

He looked across the Hudson to the Jersey hills. There were ominous clouds gathering over their peaks.

"Guess we'll have a storm," he said.

A low, moaning sound swept down the river, and the clouds advanced rapidly toward the sun.

"It's comin'!" cried Fergus. "Them chaps that's on the river had better come ashore lively. Hallo! what's that fellow tryin' to do? He can't row worth a cent, and the tide's dead ag'inst him."

Fergus watched the boat that had attracted his attention eagerly. Its occupants—there were two—seemed unskilled in the use of the oar.

"By jinks!" cried Fergus, excitedly, "unless I'm very much mistaken, that's Clint Stuyvesant, and he's got a gal with him! Well, I never!"

At this moment a squall of wind went shrieking down the river, the sun disappeared, and the sky assumed a leaden hue. The before smooth surface of the river was suddenly broken into tumultuous waves.

The boat containing Clinton Stuyvesant and his companion was some half a mile from the pier, and drifting seaward, entirely at the mercy of the waves.

"They'll be swamped as sure as fate!" cried Fergus. "Guess I'd better go for them."

In a moment he had divested himself of his cap, jacket and shoes—he did not wear any stockings—and the next he took a "header" from the end of the pier into the river.

His head rose above the waves, and shaking the water from his eyes like a water-dog, he began to swim with swift strokes toward the boat.

He had this advantage over the angry waves that the tide was in his favor, and carried him in the direction of the boat.

He swam steadily for five minutes, making the most encouraging progress, and then he raised his head as far as he could out of the water and shouted, in his shrillest tones:

"Stick to her, Clint, I'm comin'!"

"Good for you!" came back the answer, in tones that indicated Clinton Stuyvesant was by no means dismayed by the perilous position in which he had been placed by this sudden storm.

The rain now descended in torrents. The wind and the heavy sea rendered the little boat entirely unmanageable, the waves washing over it and threatening every moment to submerge it.

The presence of his girl companion rendered Clinton Stuyvesant's situation more trying, but she displayed an uncommon courage, bailing out the boat with an old tin dipper, and thus assisting him in keeping the frail craft afloat, while he toiled manfully at the oars.

But the boat drifted with the tide despite all Clinton's efforts. The swiftly-descending rain enveloped the surface of the water in a kind of misty shroud, the wind had lashed the waves into a fury, and the occupants of the boat seemed doomed to a watery grave.

But still Clinton tugged stoutly at the oars, and Fergus, breasting the angry waves steadily, approached the boat.

As he came close to it the girl, with great presence of mind, threw him the tiller rope, Clinton rested on his oars, and Fergus clambered into the boat, sinking breathlessly upon the stern seat.

"Phew!" he panted, "that swim was a breather!"

"Bully for you, Ferg; you're a trump!" cried Clinton.

"So's this girl!" rejoined Fergus. "She's awfully spunky!"

"You bet she is!" answered Clinton, laughingly. "She is my sister Geraldine."

Fergus opened his eyes widely.

"O—h!" ejaculated he; and then he added to himself below his breath, "But ain't she nice?"

"Geraldine, this is a bully boy, Fergus the Fearnaught; he's just hunky-dory!" continued Clinton. Geraldine's eyes lingered curiously for a moment on Fergus, and she seemed to be rather favorably impressed by his appearance, despite his poor attire.

"He's a brave boy," she said; "and I only hope he can get us ashore, for it's more than you can do, Clinton. Catch me coming out in a boat with you again!"

"This storm is more than I bargained for," replied Clinton; "we'd have been all right if it hadn't been for that."

"We're all right, anyway," cried Fergus. "Give me one of the oars, and I'll pull with you. We shall go ahead faster that way."

Clinton resigned one of the oars to Fergus and

their united efforts soon had a decided effect upon the boat's course; it began to move toward the pier—slowly, it is true, but still its motion was apparent.

The storm, like most summer storms, was as short as it was violent. The wind and clouds passed onward to the bay, the rain ceased, and the blue sky and sun again appeared.

Fergus faced Geraldine, who had again taken her seat in the stern, as he rowed, and he studied her with considerable interest, comparing her with Fleda, who suffered somewhat by the comparison; the thought that this was a young lady, and the other only a poor girl, would obtrude itself upon his mind.

On the whole the opinion that Fergus formed of Geraldine Stuyvesant was decidedly a favorable one.

When the sun came out again his beams exerted a soothing influence on the agitated water; the rough waves subsided, and the surface of the river began to assume its customary smoothness. This accelerated the progress of the boat and rendered the task of rowing less arduous to the young oarsmen.

The pier was reached and Clinton said: "Ferg, run up the street and see if you can find a hack. Gerry and I are wet to the skin, and we'd better get home as soon as possible, and that's the easiest way to do it."

Fergus put on his clothes and hailed the first empty carriage which he saw and returned with it to the club-house.

Clinton assisted Geraldine into it, and then called upon Fergus to enter it also. The boy hung back.

"Oh, get in!" insisted Clinton.

"I don't look fit—I'm all wet," remonstrated Fergus.

"So am I! What's the odds! I want to take you home and give you another suit of clothes for these that you have soiled—I've got lots of clothes at home that I shall never wear again. Hop in—don't be bashful."

"I don't like—"

"You must like. Step lively!"

"You had better come," cried Geraldine, from within the carriage.

Thus urged, Fergus entered the carriage.

"All aboard!" exclaimed Clinton, quickly following him.

"Where to?" asked the driver, closing the carriage door.

Clinton gave him the direction, adding: "And drive like blazes!"

The driver mounted his box, and the carriage rolled swiftly away. Fergus was amazed and delighted.

For the first time in his life, or within his recollection, and it amounted to pretty much the same thing, Fergus was having a carriage ride, and he felt a glow of satisfaction over the reflection.

He and Clinton were quite chatty during the ride, though they had to exert their lungs considerably to make themselves heard above the din and rattle of the wheels of the carriage, for the driver was not neglectful of Clinton's admonition to drive "like blazes."

The carriage stopped at last, the door was opened by the driver, and the three alighted. The driver received his fare, remounted his box and drove away.

Fergus stared at the massive brown-stone pillars and the steps, with crouching stone dogs on either side, and the round fountain behind the strong railing. The house had a majestic, though somewhat gloomy appearance.

"It's just splendid!" exclaimed Fergus, overcome by its grandeur.

"Wait till you see the inside," said Clinton. "There's more stairs to get up and down than the nursery rhyme tells about. Now, Gerry, let's fly in. I've got my latch-key. You hurry up to your room and change, and I'll take Fergus up to mine. Come on."

Clinton thrust his key into the key-hole, but before he could turn it the door opened and a richly-dressed and handsome lady appeared upon the threshold and exclaimed excitedly:

"Oh, my children! what has happened to you?"

Fergus turned to run down the steps, but Clinton caught him by the arm and held him.

"Hold on! what are you about? Don't run away!" he cried. "It's only mother. We went out on the river for a sail, and got ducked, mother," he explained to her, still grasping Fergus's arm and preventing him from going. "This boy helped us; Fergus Fearnaught he's called—and it's a good name for him, because he don't scare worth a cent. Gerry will tell you how it happened. I'm going to take Ferg up to my room and give him a suit of my old clothes."

Mrs. Stuyvesant scrutinized Fergus keenly.

"He looks as if he needed them," she said, in a kindly manner.

"You bet he does!"

"He has an honest face."

"Oh, yes, he's poor, but honest! Ain't you, Ferg?"

Thus appealed to, he answered modestly:

"I try to be."

"Come, Geraldine, you must change your wet clothes as quickly as you can," said Mrs. Stuyvesant, and she added to her son: "You can take your young friend up to your room, Clinton."

Geraldine followed her mother, and Clinton dragged Fergus.

"Here we are!" cried Clinton, opening a door and ushering Fergus into a room of ample size and handsomely furnished. "This is my snugery. How do you like it?" he continued.

"It's splendid!" answered Fergus.

Everything was splendid in his eyes at that moment, for the poor boy's senses were completely dazzled by the luxuriance with which he found himself surrounded.

The apartment had two windows, and walking to one of them Fergus found that they looked down upon the avenue.

"This is a front room," he said.

"Of course it is," replied Clinton. "You don't suppose I would take a back room do you, as many as I had to choose from? No, sir—I'm bound to have the best. How do you like the way I am fixed up here?"

"Splendid!" cried Fergus again.

Disjointed fishing-poles, guns, pistols, masks, foils, boxing-gloves, Indian clubs, dumb-bells, and baseball bats were scattered promiscuously in the different corners.

Clinton went to a closet at the foot of the bed, opened it, and displayed a large number of garments within. There were coats, pants and vests of all shapes, hues and materials.

"Here you have them," he cried. "I'll pick you out a suit—a nice one, too—fix you up so your mother won't know you when you go home. Strip off your old duds! Here, this dark-brown suit will be just the thing. I've outgrown it, and I guess it will just about fit you, and it's almost as good as new."

The tears gathered in Fergus's eyes at this liberality.

"It's real good of you," he said, with emotion.

"Oh, nonsense; not a bit of it," replied Clinton, in his careless fashion. "They'd be given away to the ragman, perhaps, and you'd better have them than him. I've taken a notion to you, and when I like a fellow, I like him; there's no half-way business to me. Hold on! don't put them on yet—you must have a clean shirt."

"Eh, a clean shirt?" stammered Fergus.

"Of course! I'm going to give you a full rig, from top to toe!"

Clinton was as good as his word and soon the two were attired in new suits.

"How is that?" he asked Clinton.

"Tip-top!"

"How do these clothes fit?"

"First-rate!"

Clinton now combed and brushed his hair before the looking-glass on the bureau, and then advised Fergus to do the same.

"Well, I think I do look better," replied Fergus, as he stood before the glass brushing his long, silky, flaxen hair, and he smiled complacently at his own image. "I'd like to wear good clothes like these all the time."

"Why don't you?"

"Haven't got the brads to stand it."

"The what?"

"The spondulix."

"Oh, oh, the rhino—that's what you mean, eh? Money makes the mare go, and the ponies, too. A fellow can have lots of fun if he can only pony up for it."

"Guess you have lots of fun," answered Fergus, glancing about the room.

"What makes you think so?"

"Cause you've got lots of things here to have it with."

"Oh, yes; I'm tolerably well supplied. How would you like to put on the gloves for a few minutes, Fergus?" he inquired.

"Gloves, eh?"

"Yes—boxing-gloves—these. You know what boxing is, don't you?"

"Oh, yes—sparring, you mean. But I never had any gloves on when I sparred. 'Pears to me you couldn't hurt much hitting a chap with those stuffed balls on your hands."

Clinton laughed.

"You've hit it—that's just what is intended. These gloves are made to box with in fun and not in earnest. Put on a pair and we'll have a set-to, and then I'll show you about the house."

"Anything to oblige," replied Fergus, and he put on a pair of the gloves. "Lordeal! how buncy they make a fellow's fingers feel."

"Now, time!" shouted Clinton, in true pugilistic style. "Swing your left duke, and hit out straight from the shoulder, Fergus!"

With this admonition, Clinton brushed the end of Fergus's nose with his right-hand glove.

"Do you want it right from the shoulder?" inquired Fergus.

"Yes, send it good and hot!"

Fergus struck Clinton a resounding blow, despite his efforts to stop it, full upon the chest, which caused the aristocratical youth to sit down on the floor in a pithy and very unceremonious manner.

"Now's that for hot?" asked Fergus.

"Now!" gasped Clinton. "That beats me!"

Fergus lifted him to his feet again.

"Try a little more?" he said.

"No," answered Clinton, laughing. "no, enough is as good as a feast. Your right duke is in too good condition for me. Throw off the gloves, and I'll show you what a queer old house this is. Besides, I want mother and Gerry to see you, now I've got you dressed up."

"What am I to do with my old clothes?" asked Fergus.

"Oh, leave them here, and I'll have them thrown into the ash-barrel."

"No, no, don't do that!" cried Fergus, quickly. "I want them."

"You want them?" rejoined Clinton, surprisedly.

"Why, what do you want of them?"

"For every day, to work in—I can get more tobs with my old clothes on than I can in these good clothes."

Clinton was still more surprised.

"Can you?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes; folks are apt to take pity on a chap when he looks poor."

"That's so!" exclaimed Clinton, struck by the force of this reasoning.

Dazed and bewildered, with very much of the same feeling that must have filled the breast of Aladdin when he penetrated into the cave of jewels and saw the golden trees laden with their precious fruit, Fergus followed Clinton through the mansion, the servants nodding kindly to him as the friend of the "young master," and finally the exploration ceased in the sitting-room beneath the stained-glass skylight, and here were three persons.

Fergus saw Geraldine in a white dress, with a cherry-colored sash, and Mrs. Stuyvesant, in a rich silk of a garnet hue, but the strange gentleman made him draw back and whisper in Clinton's ear:

"There's your father—maybe he won't like my being here."

"No, it isn't," answered Clinton. "That isn't the governor; that's my uncle Elliott. Don't you be frightened; he won't eat you. Come along."

He dragged Fergus along by the arm, crying out:

"See here, mother and Gerry, I've brought Fergus here to show you what a nice-looking fellow he is when he's dressed up. Make your best bow, Fergus," he added, in an undertone, to him, and Fergus ducked his head accordingly.

Elliott Yorke turned to look at the strange boy, and an involuntary exclamation broke from his lips.

"Good heavens!" he cried, in a tone of great surprise.

CHAPTER VI.

FERGUS CREATES AN IMPRESSION.

Mrs. STUYVESANT gazed up in wonder in her brother's face. He had been standing beside her, resting one arm upon her high-back chair, while he conversed with her. He was a man who seldom displayed any emotion—a calm, dignified gentleman, with his once dark-brown hair and beard thickly streaked with gray. She was at a loss to account for his sudden emotion.

"What surprises you, Elliott?" she asked.

"The boy—look at him."

"I do—and he's not bad-looking, as Clinton says; what freaks he has, to be sure; but for this lad, so Geraldine tells me, both she and Clinton might have been drowned."

"But do you not see? his face, his hair—those eyes—the very hue!" whispered Yorke, bending down his head to do so.

Mrs. Stuyvesant studied Fergus's face intently, and the lad became embarrassed under the scrutiny, shifting his feet uneasily, and blushing until his usually pale cheeks assumed a vivid tint of carnation.

"How they're looking at me," he whispered to Clinton.

"Let them look," returned that irrepressible youth. "A cat may look at a king! Their looks won't hurt you. Hold up your head; you're looking fine, and that's what's the matter."

"Am I?" asked Fergus, dubiously.

"To be sure you are! Why, you are handsomer than a great many girls I know—handsomer than Gerry there."

"Oh, I don't think so!" rejoined Fergus, quickly.

At this moment Geraldine tripped toward them, and shook hands with Fergus.

"Clinton has fixed you up real nice," she said; "and I am glad he has, because you are such a brave boy."

And the blushes on Fergus's cheeks grew deeper still as he shook hands with, and heard the words of the little maiden.

"Don't mention it," he stammered. "I'd swim clear down to Staten Island to get you out of a scrape."

During this, Mrs. Stuyvesant completed her scrutiny.

"Strangely like!" she said.

"Ah! you see it, then?" he responded, eagerly.

"The resemblance?"

"Yes. Who does he put you in mind of?"

"Lorania."

"My wife?"

"Yes."

Elliott Yorke drew a long breath; it appeared as if some unpleasant suspicion that had just then crept into his mind had been confirmed.

"It is very singular," he murmured.

"Can this boy be any relation of your wife's?" asked Mrs. Stuyvesant.

The question annoyed him.

"Impossible!" he rejoined, quickly. "Lorania, when I married her, was Garret Van Amringe's only surviving child. The others died in infancy. She never had a brother or sister married—she was the last of the family."

"I have an idea that this boy is a Van Amringe. Such a resemblance could not be entirely accidental, it appears to me. Resemblances run strangely in families. See how much Geraldine resembles me."

"But you are her mother—what more natural?" His brow clouded as he continued: "And if that boy is like his mother she is the very image of—"

He paused abruptly, as if he found the thought too repugnant for utterance.

"Lorania?" she supplied.

"Yes," he answered.

"Oh! what a preposterous idea," she exclaimed. "You must not entertain it. I will question the boy, and you will speedily find that a random resemblance has misled you. Clinton, bring your young friend here," she called out to him.

Clinton pushed Fergus forward with this admonition: "Hold up your head, don't be so bashful!"

Elliott Yorke's gray eyes were fastened upon Fergus's face in a searching manner as the lad modestly advanced. With all his fearlessness Fergus felt abashed in the presence of this dignified gentleman and handsome lady; but modesty is always the attendant of true courage.

"What is your name, my lad?" inquired Mrs. Stuyvesant, in a kindly manner.

"Fergus Fearnaught," answered Fergus, promptly.

"And he's a bully boy," added Clinton, impressively.

"Oh, Clinton, for shame!" cried Mrs. Stuyvesant. "How often have I requested you to refrain from such expressions. I dislike to hear such slang."

"The young men of the present day are not what they were in my boyhood," observed Elliott Yorke.

"Of course not, uncle," returned the incorrigible Clinton. "I used to hear grandfather say the same thing about the boys in his time. You wasn't up to his mark, any more than we are to yours—but the world still moves, and boys are livelier than they used to be."

Elliott Yorke's grave features relaxed into a smile.

"Wisdom from the mouth of a babe," he said.

"We old fellows stand still, and the world moves away from us. But the heart never grows old. It maintains all its freshness through all the changes and mutations of time."

While he made these remarks his eyes lingered upon Fergus's face, and he found the likeness that had at first impressed him growing stronger and stronger.

Mrs. Stuyvesant brought the conversation back to the starting point by saying:

"You have a singular name—Fergus Fearnaught! Is Fearnaught the name of your family?"

"I don't know," replied Fergus.

"Was it your father's name?" pursued Mrs. Stuyvesant.

"I don't know," replied Fergus again.

"Don't know!" repeated Mrs. Stuyvesant, surprisedly. "Don't you know what your father's name was?"

"No, ma'am; I don't know anything about him."

"Ah!" murmured Elliott Yorke; and he exchanged an inquiring glance with Mrs. Stuyvesant.

She continued her inquiries, but in so genial a manner that Fergus readily gave her his confidence.

"What name did your mother have?" she asked.

"I don't know, answered Fergus. "I don't know any more about my mother than I do about my father. I never saw either of them since I have been old enough to remember anything."

"Poor boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Stuyvesant, involuntarily, and this display of sympathy went straight to Fergus's heart. "Who brought you up?"

Fergus hesitated here, and his face flushed, but after a moment's pause he answered:

"I was brought up in the almshouse in Rockland county, but they didn't treat me well, so I ran away, and came down here; and I had a pretty rough time of it until Fleda's mother took me in, but now I'm doing pretty fair."

"The history of many a poor boy in this great city," said Elliott Yorke. "Were you called Fergus in the almshouse, my boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Anything else?"

"No, sir."

"Then where did you get the name of Fearnaught?"

"Because he's so spunky," volunteered Clinton.

Fergus explained how his name had been bestowed upon him by Fleda Nandrus, and this led to quite an account of Fleda and her mother, and the peanut speculation in which that sprightly young maiden had just engaged. Elliott Yorke was much interested in this account, and when Fergus had finished he took out his pocket-book, saying:

"As you have to furnish capital for this enterprise, you must permit me to aid you, as a recompense for the service you to-day rendered my nephew and niece."

With this he gave Fergus a five-dollar greenback.

"Oh! but I don't want it," stammered Fergus.

"Yes, you do," whispered Clinton. "Take it—he's got lots of money, and he'll never miss it—take it, take all you can get; that's the way I do, and I make it fly lively, you bet!"

Fergus put the note in his vest-pocket.

"I'm much obliged to you, sir," he said; "but I'll do anything for Clint, here, and his sister, too, and never ask a cent for it."

"And so would Clint for you," returned the heir of the Stuyvesants. "You're hunky-dory! But come, let's mizzle; I guess they have seen about all they want to do of us just at present. Ta, ta, uncle; save the first vacancy in the store for my bold Fergus, here; he'll make a good clerk, for he takes naturally to boats and all that sort of thing."

"I will," replied Elliott Yorke, promptly. "He shall have the first vacancy that occurs."

"All right; then I needn't say anything to the governor as I was going to—about it. Come, let's skedaddle!"

So saying, Clinton locked his arm in that of Fergus, and led him from the room.

Fergus followed Clinton in quite a flutter of excitement, but it was of a pleasurable nature. He rolled his old clothes into a bundle and Clinton gave him a newspaper to wrap them up in.

"I'm in luck to-day," he exclaimed, as he bustled himself about this. "A new suit of clothes, and a five-dollar bill! By jinks! won't Fleda open her eyes when she sees me?"

"Let her open them!" rejoined Clinton. "Give her a good look, and don't charge her anything. You deserve all you've got; and that's where"

are lucky, for a fellow doesn't always get all he deserves in this world! Come on now, and I'll let you out by the side door.

"Take care of yourself!" he said.

"I'll try to!"

Fergus sped lightly down the steps, and turned his face homeward.

It was six o'clock by the time he reached the old house on Baxter street, and he found Fleda and her mother waiting supper for him.

"Mercy's sakes!" cried Fleda, the moment she saw him; "whatever have you been doing to yourself? Oh! why I never should have known you on the street."

"Don't I look gay?"

"Prime! You've got a new suit of clothes?"

"Yes," answered Fergus, triumphantly; "let's have supper first, for I'm awful hungry, and then I'll tell you all about it."

CHAPTER VII.

LORANIA YORKE.

CEDAR LAWN was the name which had been given to the residence that the rich merchant, Elliott Yorke, occupied upon Bergen Heights.

It was the abode of luxury. Who could be other-wise than happy beneath the roof that covered that sumptuous furnishing?

And yet, if the gossip of the neighbors was to be credited, the mistress of this stately mansion was not happy.

She had beauty, wealth, a proud station, a husband who fairly idolized her, and yet a smile was never seen on her fair face.

He had appealed to her father, old Garret Van Amringe, for the cause of this strange sadness, and the old man had answered indifferently:

"It's nothing, only her way." When he questioned Loriania, tenderly and gently, she had replied, passively, and almost like an echo to her father: "It is nothing! do not mind me; it is my way."

Elliott Yorke was by no means content. Though the senior of his fair young bride by nearly twenty years, he loved her with a strange, wild fervor, and this love was all the stronger that it had come to him so late in life.

Then Garret Van Amringe died suddenly of apoplexy—he was a high liver—and it was discovered, to everybody's surprise, that, instead of being the rich man he was supposed to be, he was deeply in debt. Reckless speculation had ruined him. When his estate was settled not a dollar was left for Loriania.

Elliott Yorke thought he had found the key to her inexplicable sadness.

"She knew how her father was involved," he told himself. "That is what has troubled her."

He questioned her upon the matter, and she frankly answered him:

"Yes, Elliott, my father was the cause of my sadness. I cannot help it, but I will strive my best against it."

He was satisfied. The thought had obtruded itself into his mind that she had come to him an unwilling bride—a thought that was very galling to his proud spirit, and this answer put that thought to rest.

The years passed on but the sadness still clouded Loriania's face. Two children were born to her, and both died in their infancy, and now there was cause for a sad look on those pale features, but it was still the same, neither deeper or more marked than before.

Elliott Yorke, immersed in business cares—he was one of the merchant princes of New York—was absent the greater part of the day from his luxurious home. His cousin and junior partner, Rufus Glendenning, occupied an apartment at Cedar Lawn. He was young enough to be Yorke's son. The merchant had taken charge of him when he was quite a lad, and made a home for him in his own family.

Rufus Glendenning owed everything he had in the world to Elliott Yorke. How grateful he was to his benefactor the events to follow will show.

Loriania, who was quite an artist, amused many an hour by sketching.

She had drawn crayons of the house and grounds, a portrait of Elliott Yorke, herself, and the two children they had lost, and these were handsomely framed and hung on the library wall.

It is pursuing this favorite occupation that I shall present her to the reader.

She is very intent upon her work, tracing a head upon a little square of card-board—a boyish head, which she draws with great skill and singular beauty. You think it must be a portrait, it looks so real and life-like—a portrait though she is drawing it from memory; and as her work progresses toward completion a wonderful change takes place in this woman, who is considered by her husband and acquaintances to be scarcely more than a living statue.

A faint tinge of pink steals to her cheeks, as delicate in hue as that which dwells in the heart of the sea-shell, her eyes gleam with a look of joy and pride, in utter contrast to their usual sad look, her breath comes pantingly, and her bosom heaves with an unwonted motion.

She lays down her pencil, having completed her task, contemplates the image she has drawn for a moment with a yearning look of love, then bows her head and presses her lips to it in a lingering caress.

"He lives—he lives! and I have seen him!" she murmurs, tremulously. "Oh! my heart, what joy, what pain, is in the thought. To see him—to know he lives, and yet not dare to—"

She paused abruptly, seized the card and thrust it into her bosom. Then she turned and coldly faced the servant who entered the library, and whose coming she had heard.

"Well, Christine?" she said.

"A gentleman to see you, ma'am," answered the maid, and she extended a card toward her as she spoke.

Mrs. Yorke arose at once to her feet and took the card, glancing quickly at the inscription upon it. It contained this name:

CYRUS JELLIFFE, LL. D.

"I have been expecting him," she said. "Is he in the parlor?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"I will go to him."

Loriania passed into the hall and through it to the front parlor door which she entered.

"You smile!" he exclaimed, as if he found something surprising in the act.

"And you wonder at it? So do I! I never thought to smile again. I felt like that king of England who never smiled again after the tidings were brought to him that the prince, his son, was drowned."

"Your loss was greater than his."

"It is not true!" she cried vehemently.

Mr. Jelliffe's features wore a look of perplexity.

"I am positive of it. The boy lives. I have the best proof of it, for I have seen him!"

She took the drawing she had made from her bosom and placed it in his hand. "There is his portrait."

He stared at it in amazement.

"Is it like?" she continued.

"Wonderfully!" Then he turned his astonished eyes from the portrait to her face. "But where did you get this?" he inquired, curiously.

"I drew it."

"How? When?"

"From memory—from the single glance that I had at his young face."

"Ah! then this is little more than a fancy sketch," he said.

"It is his very likeness," she asserted, positively.

"I have no doubt you think so," he answered, with a smile. "Where did you see this boy?"

"On Broadway—I was riding in my carriage—I saw him leaning against a lamp-post on the corner of one of the cross streets. I saw his face distinctly, and the thrill at my heart convinced me who he was. I called out to him, but he ran away—why I could not tell; but he ran away in a most unaccountable manner."

"How was he dressed?"

"Very poorly."

"Hum! I thought so."

"It is but natural. Where else could we expect to find him except among the ranks of those poor waifs who eke out a miserable livelihood in the streets of New York?"

Mr. Jelliffe deliberated, and shook his head gravely at the end of his deliberation.

"There's plenty of young reprobates in New York," he said, "and I am very much afraid that you have selected one of them, deceived by a fancied resemblance."

She resented the implication.

"It is not a fancied resemblance!" she cried. "Do you not see the likeness there?"

"Undoubtedly," he admitted.

"That is a literal transcript of the boy's features. Where else could I obtain them?"

He shook his head, by no means convinced.

"Drawn from memory after a single glance?" he asked.

"Yes."

He shook his head again, and smiled in his grave fashion.

"You draw exceedingly well, Loriania," he said; "I have remarked that before, and you have a vivid imagination. How easy, then, it would be for you to sketch out your ideal of what the boy's face would be like if he had lived until now."

She was greatly surprised.

"You believe, then, that this sketch is the result of my imagination, and not a portrait?" she inquired.

"Frankly, I do."

"You think, also, the boy is dead?"

"I think the probabilities of the case all tend that way."

"And I am satisfied that he lives, and that I have seen him. Therefore, I have sent for you, as an old and esteemed friend—my only friend, in fact—to aid me in what I consider to be my duty."

Mr. Jelliffe inclined his head.

"Whatever aid I can offer you shall be cheerfully given," he said.

"I know it," she continued. "While I awaited your coming I drew that portrait, for it is one, although you may not think so. That will aid you in the search I wish you to institute for this boy."

"You wish to ascertain beyond a doubt that he is Robert Armytage's son?"

"I do."

"To what end?"

"To place him in the position to which his birth entitles him."

He shook his head rather discontentedly at this.

"Hum! that is rather dangerous," he said.

"To him?" she cried, surprisedly.

"No, to you."

"Ah! in what way?"

"You cannot acknowledge him."

She drooped her head sorrowfully.

"No, no," she murmured. "Oh! what a cruel fate is mine!"

"It is inevitable, and you must bow to it with resignation," he continued. "I stand in your father's place toward you now."

"But your heart is not so hard as his was."

He smiled in his grave fashion.

"Perhaps not," he replied, "but I cannot permit you to sacrifice yourself."

"But my duty?"

"Your duty as a wife—the wife of such a man as Elliott Yorke—is more imperative than any other."

"Perhaps it is—but I cannot feel it so."

"You must," he answered, almost sternly. "I will act as your agent in this affair, and carry out your wishes to the letter—"

"Oh! you are so good to me," she interrupted, gratefully.

"On this condition," he added.

"A condition?"

"Yes; that you shall not be seen in the matter. You must keep in the back-ground."

"Oh! I must see him—I must speak to him. Can I not do so without his knowing who I am?"

"Perhaps, but only when we are satisfied that the boy is indeed what you take him to be, and then you must use every precaution to conceal your identity from him."

"I will—I will!"

"I will take this card with me, as it may be useful in identifying the boy. I will place it in the hands of a detective, one upon whom I can depend, though I shall by no means tell him any more than shall be absolutely necessary. Your name must not be brought into question under any circumstances. His instructions will be simply to search through New York for a boy resembling this drawing, and, when found, to ascertain if his name is Robert Armytage—was the boy given his father's name?"

"Yes, Robert F. Armytage."

"When this is proved to my satisfaction I will dispose of the boy according to your wishes. Will that content you?"

"Perfectly."

"Very well. Then I will return home."

"Will you not remain for dinner? Mr. Yorke and Mr. Glendenning will be here in an hour now."

"Excuse me, but I am expected at home. I came up from my office directly here. Need I counsel you to guard your feelings against any display of emotion that might betray your secret?"

"Fear me not. I shall not forget the lesson I have learned so thoroughly through all these passing years. The secret of the past lies hidden in my frozen heart."

She walked to the front door with him.

"Good-day," she said.

He exchanged adieux with her, walked down the stone-paved walk to the iron gate, and let himself out upon the avenue.

She went back to the library when he was gone, and sat down again at the table that contained her drawing and painting materials.

"I must sketch another portrait," she said, "but this time I will paint it in water-colors."

A labor of love is quickly performed. The portrait was soon finished. This one was drawn upon a sheet of paper, and was much larger than the other. It was only the head and a portion of the bust, about the size of an imperial photograph.

She was greatly pleased with this second effort.

"I will call it a fancy sketch and have it framed," she cried, with an almost childish admiration.

"How much the coloring improves it."

She placed it on the window sill to dry, the window being open. Scarcely had she laid it there than a sudden gust of wind caught it and bore it away.

She uttered a little scream, and ran out through the hall to go in search of it. She looked beneath the window, but could not find it. She followed the direction of the wind, which was blowing toward the avenue, and as she reached the front of the house she heard voices, and saw Elliott Yorke and Rufus Glendenning coming up the walk. Glendenning held a paper in his hand.

"He has found it," she gasped, and a chill of apprehension crept through her frame, though she could scarcely have told why.

"See what Rufus has found!" cried Elliott Yorke.

"It is mine," she said.

"Hah! a colored drawing—a boy's head," Elliott Yorke remarked, with a careless look at it.

Loriania thought that Rufus Glendenning regarded it with a singular scrutiny. She held out her hand for it, but he still retained it.

"Is it a fancy sketch?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered briefly.

Glendenning again bent his eyes upon the drawing.

"It is very singular," he said, musingly, "but I saw a boy in New York the other day who was the very image of this."

Loriania shivered, and he gave her the paper; she took it without a word, and hurried on after Elliott Yorke, who had walked on to the house.

Rufus Glendenning smiled darkly.

"A fancy sketch, eh? Oh, no!" he muttered. "The likeness was too strong for that. The boy was something to her, but what I must find out. I shrewdly suspect that her sad face has something to do with that boy!"

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ACCIDENT.

PROMPTLY in the morning, at the hour appointed, Clinton Stuyvesant made his appearance at the home of Fergus Fearnaught, and was ushered into the front room by Fleda, who, having been apprised of his coming, had "tidied" herself up, as she phrased it, for the occasion.

She and Fergus were alone together when Clinton called, Mrs. Nandrus having departed upon a day's work.

"Here you are!" cried Fergus.

"Here I am!" answered Clinton, and he took a comprehensive survey of the little maiden, who was devouring him with her sharp black eyes. "This is Fleda?" he added.

"Yes," replied Fergus.

"Nice little girl!" exclaimed Clinton, in his off-hand manner.

Fleda smirked, and dropped him a little courtesy. "I am glad you think so," she said.

"How's the peanut trade?" continued Clinton.

"I am doing as well as I expected," replied Fleda. "That's good!"

"But I can do better now, because Fergus has got more money, as you know."

"Yes, uncle Elliott came down with a V. He's a nice old chap—I always liked him. They say he'll leave me lots of money when he dies, as he hasn't got any children of his own."

"You're a lucky fellow, Clint!" cried Fergus.

Clinton laughed carelessly.

"Yes, I'm one of the chaps that you read about that's born with a silver spoon in his mouth," he replied. "How would you like to have me in the peanut business?" he added, to Fleda.

"Sakes alive! such a business wouldn't do for a gentleman like you," she answered.

"Oh! a kind of silent partner, you know—the chap that puts in money and don't have much to say. I made a raise this morning from the governor." He took a handsome portemonnaie from his pocket as he spoke. "Told him I wanted some new clothes and he came down handsomely. How much do you think I have got here?"

"Ten dollars," guessed Fergus.

"Twenty-five," guessed Fleda.

"You haven't either of you hit it. I've got fifty."

"Fifty!" echoed Fergus and Fleda, surprisedly.

It was a good deal of money in their eyes.

"That's the ticket! There's enough here to see the elephant and pay for a piece of his tail: eh, Fergus?"

"I should say so!"

"Take care you don't get into a scrape," cautioned Fleda, as they quitted the house.

As the two stood in the street, Rowdy Rube, Johnny, the Chicken, and Ragged Terry came along on the other side of the way and perceived them.

"Only twig Ferg Fearnaught!" cried Rowdy Rube.

"And there's that swell with him," said the Chicken. "Go and muddy his boots, Terry, so I can get a chance to black them."

Ragged Terry crossed the street.

"Please help a poor hophin!" he whined extending his dirty paw to Clinton.

The aristocratic youth regarded him in surprise.

"Hallo! where did this animated rag-bag spring from?" he exclaimed.

"It's Ragged Terry!" cried Fergus. "Be off with you!"

He raised his foot to kick, but Ragged Terry slipped nimbly away, and applied his thumb to his nose mockingly.

"Yer didn't come it!" he piped.

Clinton made a rush for Terry, and Rowdy Rube and the Chicken darted up an alley-way and disappeared.

Clinton did not find the task of catching Ragged Terry as easy as he had anticipated. That diminutive youth dodged and doubled with an agility that was surprising; but Clinton's mettle was up, and he determined to capture him.

At last he closed in upon him, extended his hand to grasp him, when Terry ducked suddenly down on all fours and Clinton sprawled over him, falling at full length on the sidewalk, in an awkward and decidedly mortifying manner.

When Terry rose to his feet Fergus had him by the collar of his ragged coat.

"I've got you, you little scamp!" he cried.

"Oh—o-h—o-h-h!" howled Terry; and then, with a sudden twist of his lithe body, he emerged from the coat, leaving it in Fergus's hand.

"If you've got him, hold him tight!" exclaimed Clinton, struggling up to his feet in a crestfallen manner. "Blast the little beast; he gave me an awkward spill!"

But the "little beast" darted across the street, and jumping down an open cellar door, disappeared with a celerity that was almost magical.

"Well, that beats me!" cried Clinton.

Fergus looked rather foolish, standing with the ragged coat in his hand.

"And me, too!" he answered. "We can't catch him now."

"It looks very much like it. He has dived into his hole like a fox escaping from the hounds. Are you going to take that coat home as a trophy?"

"Faugh! I should say not. It's as filthy as a fish-basket. I'll drop it here. He'll come for it when we are gone."

Fergus threw the coat down.

"Where shall we go now?" he asked.

"Let's go up to the corner and see how Fleda's trade is at her stand to-day."

"All right."

They walked away, and as the curve in the street hid them from watchful eyes, forth from their hiding-places came Rowdy Rube, the Chicken and Ragged Terry.

Terry darted swiftly across the street, anxious to regain his ragged garment, but as he picked it up, he saw something lying under it that made his little eyes bulge from his head like a lobster's.

"Oh, crickee!" he piped, shrilly.

"Halves!" cried Rowdy Rube, who came up at that moment.

"Thirds yer mane!" exclaimed the Chicken, close following at Rowdy Rube's heels. "Yer can just count me in, my covies!"

Ragged Terry clutched his prize covetously, and appeared to have a decided objection to any division. The two larger boys were one on each side of him, and watching him narrowly.

"If yer attempt to cut with it, I'll murder yer!" cried Rowdy Rube, savagely.

"And I'll put an existence to yer life!" added the Chicken, impressively.

Ragged Terry felt his weakness, but he was very loth to relinquish any portion of the prize he had so unexpectedly found.

"Tain't nuffin', much," he whined.

"None o' yer gammon—I see'd it!" cried Rowdy Rube.

"Don't yer lie to us, Terry," admonished the Chicken. "Fork over, or yer'll smell of that."

He held his clinched fist disagreeably near Terry's nose in a threatening manner.

"Come up the alley, and we'll divvy," said Rowdy Rube, clutching Ragged Terry by his right shoulder with a tenacious gripe.

"We'll do the square thing by yer," added the Chicken, fastening in a like manner upon Terry's left shoulder.

Terry resigned himself to his fate, conscious that it was inevitable, and was led like a lamb to the slaughter.

Leaving the young rascals to make a division of their prize, we will return to Fergus and Clinton.

By this time they had reached the peanut-stand on the corner of Baxter and Grand streets. It was rather a primitive affair, consisting merely of a common old pine table, and a chair without any back. But Fleda had covered the table with nice white paper, and her wares were temptingly displayed in some quaint dishes—the remnants of a peculiar set which her mother had possessed in more prosperous days, and which she had spared Fleda for this purpose.

"How's trade?" inquired Clinton, as they paused before the stand.

"Tolerably brisk," replied Fleda, smiling in a manner that displayed her teeth to good advantage.

"As pretty as a picture, and as smart as a steel-trap," Clinton thought, as he said, merrily; "I must patronize you a little, Miss Fleda, just to help along the trade, you know."

He put his hand into his pocket to extract his portemonnaie.

"Jumping Jupiter!" he ejaculated. "It's gone!"

This exclamation startled Fergus.

"What's gone?" he asked.

"My portemonnaie. Do you think any of those ragged scamps picked my pocket?"

Fergus shook his head dissentingly.

"No," he answered; "they couldn't do that. There was only Ragged Terry, and he wasn't near you but a moment. I saw Rowdy Rube and the Chicken on the other side of the street, but they cut as soon as the Chinaman began to holler."

"I must have dropped it from my pocket when I fell over that little ragamuffin."

"So you must."

"Run right back and look for it," cried Fleda, sympathetically. "You may find it."

"That's doubtful!" exclaimed Clinton, with a shake of the head. "I don't think anything in the shape of money would lay loose around this neighborhood for any length of time."

"You bet it wouldn't!" corroborated Fergus.

"But there's no harm in trying," insisted Fleda.

"Do go back; you may find it after all."

"Well, there's nothing like trying, as you say; so come along, Fergus. We'll take a look for it, anyway."

The boys hurried back to the scene of their encounter with Ragged Terry, but they did not find the pocket-book, nor see anything of Ragged Terry, Rowdy Rube, or the Chicken.

"That fifty dollars has gone up!" remarked Clinton, in a very unconcerned manner.

Fergus looked grieved.

"It's a lot of money to lose," he rejoined.

"Pooh! that's nothing. I'll make the governor pony over some more. I wonder which of the scamps got it?"

"I'll try and find our for you," replied Fergus, quickly. "Perhaps I can get it back for you."

"Ah! you know the hiding-places of these young scallawags?"

"Yes; most of them. They've got a rondévo, as they call it, under the pier at the foot of Dover street. That's where they carry their swag after one of their thieving expeditions. They don't dare to carry it to their homes, for fear of the police."

"I suppose not. Does this Ragged Terry belong to this gang of thieves?"

"Yes; he and Rowdy Rube and the Chicken, and lots more that lives in the Fourth Ward. I think if I go down to the den I shall find them there with the money."

"And do you think they would give it up to you?"

"Oh, yes; they're all afraid of me, as I have thrashed about all of them at different times; and, besides, there's two or three that I have got out of scrapes, and they would stand by me."

"Come along then; I'll go with you."

But to Clinton's great surprise Fergus objected to this proposal in a very decided manner.

"No, no!" he replied; "you can't do that. It would be as much as your life is worth for me to take you there."

"How so?"

"They'd think you were a spy, and go for you sure," exclaimed Fergus.

"But won't they go for you?"

"Oh, no, they know me, and they know I wouldn't give them away to the cops for nothing."

"Who's the cops?"

"The perlice."

"Ah, yes, I might have known that."

"They wanted me to join them—said they'd make me capt'in."

"And you couldn't see it?"

"Not much! I don't intend to mix myself up with a set of thieves, if I can help it."

"That's where your head is level, Ferg, my boy! Stick to that. 'Honesty is the best policy.' You'll make something yet, my boy. It won't be my fault if you don't, for I mean to give you a lift in the world."

The tears started to Fergus's eyes at these words, for he had one of those passionate natures which are easily excited.

"I know you do, Clint!" he exclaimed, gratefully; "and I would just die for you—see if I wouldn't?"

Clinton clapped him upon the back in a friendly manner.

"I don't want you to die for me, Ferg, my boy, but to live!" he cried. "Dying isn't on the ticket, not just at present; so you be careful among these young scallawags, and don't get into trouble."

"There'll be no danger to me—they dasen't try to hurt me."

"Don't be too risky about it. Who's their captain now?"

"Rowdy Rube."

"That's a nice name for a small party! Is he a friend of yours?"

"No, he isn't; but he's a big coward."

"How do you know he is?"

"I punched his head the other day, and he hollered good. Fetched him a clip under the chin, and he wilted."

"Ha, ha, ha! Good for you, my bully Ferg! You're the best fellow to travel with that I ever fell in with. We'll hitch horses one of these days, and see the world, and knock the spots right out of it. If you think I'd better not go along with you, I'll be getting home."

"You had better not," replied Fergus. "If I had you along with me I'd never stand a chance for the money, and I don't think I could get into the den; and if I did I wouldn't find anybody there; they'd all mizzle the moment they saw you."

"Shouldn't wonder; then I'll return to the paternal mansion. Well, I'm blest if I've got a red. Say, Ferg, have you got a stray five-cent-piece about you clothes?"

"Yes, here's one," answered Fergus, surprisedly, as he produced it. "Do you want it?"

"Yes; I want to pay my car-fare. I don't care to walk home; that's a little too much pedestrian exercise for my delicate constitution. Can you spare it?"

"Of course I can," rejoined Fergus, quickly, only too proud to serve his friend. "You can have all the money I've got, if you want it."

"But I don't; appreciating your liberality, my bold Ferg, I will content myself with this nickel. I'll come to-morrow to see how you make out in your search for my portemonnaie."

"All right."

"You'll know it, if you are fortunate enough to see it again?"

"I think so."

"I'll tell you how you can make sure of it: my initials, C. D. S., are on it."

"I'll bear that in mind."

"Now I'll be off."

A hearty hand-shake between them, and they parted.

Fergus walked back to Fleda's peanut stand.

"Have you found it?" she inquired, eagerly, the moment she beheld him.

"No," he replied.

"Where's your friend Clint?" was her next inquiry; and she flushed just a little as she made it.

"Gone home."

Fleda breathed a regretful sigh.

"Oh, my! but isn't he a nice young fellow?" she murmured; and she took up a rosy-cheeked apple, and began to polish it energetically with her apron.

"Do you like him?"

"Ever so much!"

"So do I. I mean to be a gentleman when I grow up, same as he'll be. I don't think I was ever cut out for a loafer!"

"I'm sure you were not!" replied Fleda, with emphasis.

"Give me the key to the rooms."

"Sakes alive! what do you want to go there for?" she rejoined, surprisedly.

"I want to put on my old clothes, and then I'm going to see if I can find Clint's pocketbook for him."

"Why, do you know who has got it?"

"Not for certain; but I think it lies between Ragged Terry, the Chicken, and Rowdy Rube, and I think I can find them, and if they are flush, I shall know what made them so."

"That's a good idea. Here's the key."

"I'll bring it back to you after I change my clothes," said Fergus, as he received it; "and I sha'n't be long about it, either."

He hurried away, and in ten minutes was back with the key, and dressed in the worst clothes he possessed, even worse than those in which I first presented him to the reader.

"Oh! why did you put on that ragged coat?" cried Fleda, as he gave her back the key.

"Because I wanted to look as bad as I could," he answered, smilingly.

"Well, you've succeeded! You look like a beggar!"

"That's the way I want to look. Those coves don't like to see a fellow any better dressed than they are. This will kind of gammon them."

"Where are you going?"

"I'll tell you where I've been when I come back."

"How long are you going to be gone?"

"That's hard telling; but I guess I'll be home to supper," he answered, laughingly, and walked away.

CHAPTER IX.

THE YOUNG THIEVES' DEN.

Fergus turning into Pearl street, went on to Dover street, and out on the pier.

Half-way up it, he encountered a man, who was leaning against one of the large wooden posts that are used to moor vessels, lazily smoking a cigar. He was of a large, strong frame, attired in a rough kind of business suit, and wore a black felt hat, pulled quite low down over his brows. His eyes were small, of a grayish hue, and peered from beneath heavy black eyebrows. A restless movement of the pupils, a kind of looking out of the corners, denoted a keen watchfulness, despite his sluggish attitude.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Fergus, in his impulsive manner, as he saw this lounge.

"Hallo, you!" he responded, in a gruffly amicable fashion.

The recognition between them had been mutual. This man was the mysterious tenant of the upper floor of the tenement house in Baxter street, where Fergus lived, and who was known to the other inmates of the house as Mr. John Jackson.

Fergus wondered what he was doing there, but John Jackson took the boy's presence as a matter of course. Why, the ensuing conversation will explain.

"Going to the den?" inquired Mr. John Jackson, who had a faculty of conversing without removing his cigar from his mouth.

"Yes," replied Fergus; and he was perplexed by Mr. John Jackson's knowledge of the young thieves' haunt.

"Ah! I didn't know you belonged to that crowd," continued Mr. John Jackson, meditatively.

"I don't," replied Fergus, pointedly.

Mr. John Jackson looked surprised, and somewhat incredulous.

"How did you know anything about it?" he demanded, suspiciously.

"How did you?" retorted Fergus.

Mr. John Jackson's thick lips parted in a grin, and his strong white teeth glistened strangely in contrast with his heavy black mustache, and the end of the cigar, firmly gripped by those teeth, was jerked up toward his left eye again.

"Cute little cuss!" he muttered. "Well, I just discovered it by accident."

"And I discovered it one day when I came down here with the Chicken to have a swim," said Fergus.

Jackson nodded his head, still quite affable, and his keen gray eyes lingered pleasantly upon the frank and fearless face of the boy before him.

"Going to join them?" he asked.

"No," answered Fergus, decidedly.

"I wouldn't!" rejoined Jackson, with an approving nod of the head. "Game too small for a lad of your mettle. I can put you up to something where you can make more in a night than they make in a year. Some risk, though. But you are not afraid?"

"Not much!"

"Ah! I thought not—don't look like it," responded Jackson, with satisfaction. "Can always tell by the eyes what stuff a boy has got in him. You'll do! I'll gamble on you every time. Come up to my room to-night—you know where it is?—top flight, first door to the left—come up, I want to have a talk with you. By-by!"

Mr. John Jackson gave his cigar another twist, nodded his head in a mysterious fashion, pulled himself up leisurely from the leaning posture he had assumed against the post, and sauntered away.

Fergus turned to look after him.

"Well, he's a queer kind of cove, anyway," he thought. "I wonder what he wants with me?"

He did not deliberate long over this question, however, his mind being intent upon the purpose that had brought him there.

He walked on to the end of the pier, where he found six boys, whose ages ranged from twelve to seventeen, engaged in bathing, jumping and diving, with great glee, into the river.

As the day was warm, Fergus thought it would be a good idea to take a swim himself; besides, he reasoned, it would allay any suspicion that might be excited as to his object in coming thither.

He was hailed boisterously by the boys, who all knew him, as he knew them. They were part of a gang of young thieves who made their headquarters here, and it was generally supposed that they lived on what they could steal from vessels, or from the Fulton market.

Under the pier they had a snug hiding-place where they could live and sleep and elude the police. They prowled around the docks, watching their opportunity to steal any small articles that were left lying about.

When chased by a policeman, they jumped into the water (all being expert swimmers), dove out of sight, and swam between the spiles under the dock, and defied arrest.

If a policeman procured a boat and followed them, the young scamps, like wharf rats, which they so much resembled, would swim out on the side toward the next pier, and so escape.

When it was high tide it was dangerous for a man to venture into their amphibious den. Fergus quickly divested himself of his garments as he answered their greeting, and then jumped into the water. He had recognized all that were there: Micky Shea, Archie Quale, Johnny Cregan, Dicky Long, and two brothers, named respectively, Tommy and Billy Googan; but Rowdy Rube, Johnny Dugan, the Chicken, and Ragged Terry, were not among the swimmers.

Thinking they might be in the den, Fergus swam between the spiles, and clambered up to it.

The den was formed by nailing cross-pieces to the spiles, about two feet below the top, and boards were laid across these, forming a floor. This served

them as a receptacle for their stolen goods, as well as a hiding-place.

Fergus found the den unoccupied; the parties he sought were not there. He dropped back into the water again.

"No use fooling round here," he muttered. "I must look somewhere else for them."

He climbed up to the top of the pier, where he found all the boys collected.

"Goin' out, Ferg?" inquired Micky Shea.

"Yes," answered Fergus, beginning to dress himself.

"Why, you hain't been in but a minnit."

"Long enough. I only wanted a dip."

His example seemed to be contagious, for the other boys began to resume their clothes. This was not a lengthy operation, as none of them possessed any superfluous articles of wardrobe.

Presently a loud outcry burst from the lips of Tommy Googan, the youngest boy in the party.

"Somebody's gone through my pockets!" he cried. "You've stole my money, Dicky Long!"

"Yer lie!" retorted Dicky Long, promptly. "Say that ag'in and I'll belt you in the snout!"

"Give me back my money!" whined Tommy, retreating to his brother, who was a much larger and older boy than himself.

"I ain't got it—I've got my— O-h!"

Dicky Long had thrust his hands into his pockets as he spoke, and this sudden break in his words and exclamation was caused by the sudden discovery that they were empty.

"Somebody's been through me!" he added, excitedly.

"And me, too!" howled Micky Shea, Archie Quale, and Johnny Cregan, in a dismal chorus.

Billy Googan pretended that he had also been robbed.

"Don't you know who's done it?" he asked, significantly.

All eyes were turned upon Fergus, and he was not slow to comprehend the implication. He flushed indignantly, and turned quickly upon Micky Shea, an old adversary of his.

"You lying scamp! do you mean to say I stole your money?" he demanded, fiercely.

Micky drew a knife from his pocket, which opened with a spring and displayed a murderous-looking blade, four inches in length.

"Keep off!" he shouted, brandishing the knife.

"You've been a-whipping me for some time, whenever you got a chance, and you ain't a-goin' to do it no more. You've belted me in the snout and kicked me, and now if you tech me I'll just rip you up!"

"You just put down your knife, and I'll fight you with my left arm, tie the right behind me," said Fergus, persuasively. "You're the thief that's got the money, and you know it!"

There was a murmur among the boys at this proposal.

"Put down your knife, and fight it out fair," suggested Johnny Cregan.

But Micky Shea had no idea of accepting Fergus's challenge. As he had intimated, he had long cherished a grudge against him, and he was thirsting for revenge. He wished, however, to have the rest of the band make common cause against Fergus, for he still stood in fear of him, even with the knife in his hand.

"He hain't got no business 'round here," he cried. "He ain't one of us, and he only came here to steal our money."

This was more than Fergus's hot blood could stand.

"I'll steal you!" he shouted, and made a sudden dash at Micky Shea.

The suddenness of this attack took Micky by surprise, for he did not think Fergus would dare to attack him with the knife in his hand.

He made a futile slash at Fergus with the knife, but the Fearnought put the blow aside with his left arm and shot out with his right, planting his fist between Micky's eyes with such good will that the young rascal was sent literally "heels over head," for he went down on his back with a resounding thump, and his legs went up and he rolled over like a ball, and then lay sprawling on his face, howling dismally.

The knife was thrown from his hand by the violence of his fall. Billy Googan instantly grasped it.

"He's kilt Micky; go for him, boys!" he shouted.

But he found himself gone for with a celerity that was more surprising than pleasant, for Fergus sprang upon him with a panther-like bound, wrenched the knife from his hand before he could use it, and as Billy twisted away from him, administered a resounding kick upon the rear part of his person, which just then was brought prominently forward.

"Now, I'll fix some of you!" shouted Fergus, flourishing the knife; but this was done merely to frighten the boys, for he had no idea of using it.

The fray was interrupted in an unexpected manner.

"Cheese it! here's a cop!" cried Dicky Long, shrilly. Fergus found himself grasped roughly by the shoulder, and the knife was knocked out of his hand by the blow of a club which did not spare his knuckles.

"I've got you, you young devilskin!" exclaimed a voice, and Fergus speedily discovered that it belonged to a brawny policeman.

The young thieves, at the warning cry, adopted their usual tactics, darting to the string-piece of the pier, plunged over into the water, and then, swimming between the spiles, disappeared like so many scared wharf-rats.

Fergus and the policeman were left alone on the pier.

"Oh-h!" cried Fergus as his knuckles smarted

from the sharp rap of the policeman's club. "You needn't knock my hand off!"

"I'll knock your head off if I see fit," returned the policeman, gruffly.

"You'll see fits if you try it," exclaimed Fergus, fiercely.

The policeman shook him up vigorously, and with a grim kind of satisfaction.

"Do you want a good clubbing, you imp of the devil?" he inquired, and with an exhibition of facetiousness, as if he was pleased with the boy's spirit while he reproved it.

"No, I don't," replied Fergus; but he ceased to struggle, convinced of the folly of resistance to strength so much superior to his own.

"Why don't you take a fellow of your own size?" "Ho, ho! You find I've got a taking way with me, do you?" cried the policeman, with a chuckle.

"Altogether too taking," responded Fergus. "I wish you'd take your hands off me."

"Never a take, my young limb of Satan!" I must take you in. I've been watching your crowd for some time, and you're the first one I've been able to lay my hands on. We'll have to make an example of you. So pick up your knife and come along."

"It isn't my knife."

"Whose is it?" questioned the policeman, his manner implying that he thought Fergus had uttered an untruth.

"Micky Shea's."

"Who's he—one of the gang?"

"Yes."

"How did you come by it?"

"I took it from Billy Googan, who was going to stick me with it."

The policeman laughed.

"Pity he hadn't stuck two or three of you," he said; "it would have saved the city the expense of hanging you one of these days. Pick up the knife, anyway; no nonsense, mind! If you try any shenanigan on me I'll club you within an inch of your life."

He still retained his grasp on Fergus as he stooped to pick up the knife.

"Now shut up the blade."

Fergus did so, and the policeman took it from him and put it in his pocket.

"That's right," he said; "just you keep docile. It'll make things easier for you. Come along, now."

"What for? I ain't done anything—I don't belong to that thieving gang!"

The policeman shook his head in an incredulous manner.

"Tell that to the marines!" he rejoined. "You can't play that on me—it's too thin! I've been twiggung your crowd for some time, and I saw you thick enough with the others before you got into the fight."

Fergus could not deny this. He was beginning to experience the evil results of keeping bad company.

"They said I stole their money," he said doggedly.

"Just as like as not you did. That's the kind of a crowd you are; when you can't steal from anybody else you steal from yourselves just to keep your hands in."

The policeman led Fergus along, the boy submitting doggedly. Indeed, he was rather bewildered by finding himself a prisoner under such circumstances; but, knowing his own innocence, he did not imagine that any punishment awaited him.

He was yet to learn how justice is administered in the great metropolis of the New World.

"Adversity makes strange bed-fellows," is an old saying, and a true one, as Fergus discovered on that eventful night of his life. A horrid din and babble were kept up through the night, by three intoxicated prisoners, and he found it impossible to sleep.

He hailed the approach of morning with delight, looking for a speedy release. He was marched to the Tombs with the others. Justice Nixlaw was on the bench, a short, fat man, with a consequential look, and a high opinion of his own merits, and the celerity with which he disposed of the cases, and meted out "thirty days—two months—three months—a year," fairly took away Fergus's breath.

His turn came in due course, and he was led before the Justice, by the policeman who had arrested him.

The Justice knitted his brows and frowned at Fergus in a portentous manner.

"Hah! who's this?" he inquired. "A young reprobate?"

Fergus fired up at this.

"I ain't a reprobate!" he cried.

"Hah! of course not. I don't suppose you would admit it—you never do," he said, sarcastically. "Who arrested him?"

"I did," answered the officer.

"On what charge? What's he been doing?"

The policeman related the circumstances that led him to arrest Fergus.

"Here's a young scamp!" cried the Justice, with an oracular shake of the head. "One of those young thieves—fighting, with a knife in his hand. You make a good beginning, young man."

"I ain't begun yet," remonstrated Fergus. "I'm not a thief. I don't belong to the gang; I was only down there swimming—"

"That's against the city ordinance," interrupted the Justice, sternly.

"Well, a feller oughter have a chance to wash himself this warm weather," rejoined Fergus, doggedly.

The Justice shook his head again in his portentous fashion.

"I shall have to send you up," he said.

"I don't want to go up; I ain't done nothin' wrong!" cried Fergus.

"Do you think he's one of those young thieves?" the justice inquired of the policeman.

"I have no doubt of it," replied that officer.
 "Probably the ringleader?"
 "I shouldn't be surprised."
 "What have you got ag'in' me?" demanded Fergus, surprised by this testimony.
 "Silence!" roared the justice. "You are here to answer questions, not to ask them. What's your name?"

"Fergus Fearnaught."
 "Ah, yes; I might have known it would be something like that. Fearnaught? Do-naught more likely. What does your father do?"

"Ain't got any."
 "Your mother's a widow, eh? Ah, yes; lot's of that kind of widow in the city."

"I haven't got any mother."
 "No mother nor father?"
 "No," answered Fergus, tremulously.
 "Hah! never had any, perhaps, eh?"

He paused here and smiled grimly, and the attendant policemen chuckled audibly at the joke, as they were in duty bound to do. "Where do you live?" he continued.

"In Baxter street."
 "Ah, yes; nice neighborhood that! What do you do for a living?"

"I do jobs, when I can get them."
 "And steal when you can't! Oh, yes; it's thirty days for you. Take him away."

"Thirty days!" exclaimed Fergus, in dismay.
 "Thirty days! when I ain't done nothing, you old pudding-head!"

"Hah! what's that?" cried the justice, wrathfully.
 "Pudding-head, eh? That's thirty days more!"

The policeman dragged Fergus away, whispering in his ear:
 "Hold your tongue, you fool, or you'll get six months."

Soon the prison-van arrived, and all those who had been sentenced were placed in it. The door was shut and bolted. The deputy-sheriff took his seat by the door, the driver gathered up the reins, the load of prisoners rolled out, and the iron gates clanged behind them.

The route of the "Black Maria" was through Elm to Grand street, up the Bowery to Third avenue, then to Twenty-sixth street and down it to the East River.

At length the pier at the foot of Twenty-sixth street was reached, and the van rattled through a large gateway, having over it the following inscription:

DEPARTMENT OF CHARITIES AND CORRECTION.

This is the last of the wayside inns on the road to Blackwell's Island.

There the prisoners were unloaded. The men were put in a waiting-cell on one side of the pier, and the women in a corresponding cell on the other.

The deputy-sheriff came to the grating of the men's cell.

"Boys, do you want any tobacco or anything to eat?" he inquired. "Here's an old man will sell you some."

"Yes—yes—yes!" was the speedy answer from a dozen throats.

"I'm going to spend all my money!" cried one.
 "What do I want of money where I'm goin'?"

Another tried to sell to a friend of the deputy-sheriff, who was gazing curiously at the prisoners, an old silver watch that wouldn't go. He was "dead broke," he said, and wanted some money.

By way of banter the bystander offered him a dollar for it, and the offer was at once accepted.

In the meanwhile, an old, decrepit-looking man, with long white hair and a thick white beard, approached the grating with a basket containing papers of chewing tobacco and some stale cakes. He speedily disposed of his small stock in trade, all but one cake.

"This cake is for the light-haired boy," he said.

Fergus started as he found himself thus alluded to, and he thought the voice sounded familiar in his ears. He approached the grating.

"Here's the cake, bubby," continued the old man.
 Fergus extended his hand for it, and as the old man placed it in his grasp, he pressed his hand significantly, and whispered:

"I'll get you out of this, Fergus. Watch at night—the first dark one that comes—and when you hear the sound of a fish-born jump into the river and strike out for the opposite shore. There'll be a boat ready to pick you up. Mum! don't give it away to anybody!"

Another significant pressure of the hand and the old man hobbled away.

Fergus was in a maze. The old man was Mr. John Jackson, the mysterious tenant of the upper floor of the Baxter street house.

"Well, I hope he will get me off," mused Fergus.
 "for I don't want to live long with such a crowd as this."

An hour later he was ushered into a cell, the door of which bore this inscription:

"No. 1367 FERGUS FEARNAUGHT, aged 16 yrs. American. Vagrant. 60 days—August 26th, 186—."

He had reached Blackwell's Island.

Ellingham H. Pickles sat in his office with a pile of briefs, bound with the customary red tape, spread out on a table before him, making a show of being very busily occupied. This was a device he always adopted when he expected a visitor.

He had been looking out of his windows, glancing up the street toward Broadway—his office was on the corner of one of the streets leading in that direction—when he saw Mr. Rufus Glendenning coming down the street. He knew his purpose must be a visit to his office, and so he prepared himself accordingly.

"Come in!" he cried, when he heard the knock at the door, and Rufus Glendenning entered the office.
 "Have you learned anything?" inquired Glendenning, eagerly.

"Hum! not a great deal, but still something."
 "Something?"

"Well, in fact, every thing that can be learned at present, for the boy possesses the remarkable faculty of being able to hold his tongue. He's sly, sir—s-l-y!"

"You have discovered where he lives?"
 "Yes; in a tenement house in Baxter street, on the ground floor, with a poor widow and her daughter. The daughter is sharp—sharp as vin-e-gar!"

"How long has he lived there?"
 "About two years."

"And is he known by the name of Fergus Fearnaught?"

"By that, and no other."
 "But hasn't he another name?"

"If he has nobody knows anything about it but himself—and he'll never tell it—never! Haven't you an idea now, in confidence, in the strictest confidence, who he belongs to?" asked Pickles, persuasively.

"Not the slightest," replied Glendenning, with a promptitude that convinced Pickles he was speaking the truth. "That is what I want to find out."

"But the resemblance which you recognized—I thought—hum! ah!"

"That is what I want to account for. It may be accidental after all. But then the picture," he muttered, as the recollection of it flashed through his mind. "Oh, by heaven, there is more than chance in this!"

He sprang excitedly to his feet, and hurriedly put on his hat.

"Perhaps she could tell! I'll try it!" he continued.
 "Keep on, my friend, you are doing well; don't lose sight of the boy! I'll see you again—in a day or two."

Glendenning hurried away.

"She!" mused Pickles. "Ah, hum, hab! There's a woman in the case—always a woman! I might have known it!"

CHAPTER X.

TRACKING THE SECRET.

LORANIA YORKE descended from her chamber to the library to select a book and pass away the hour that yet remained before her husband would return from his place of business in New York. To her surprise she found Rufus Glendenning there.

He was standing before a small picture, in a plain walnut frame, which hung against the wall. This was the portrait that Loriania had painted, and she had caused it to be framed and placed there.

It represented a boy with flaxen hair, bright blue eyes, a peachy complexion, and regular and handsome features. In fact, it was a charming painting of a boy's head, who might be some fifteen or sixteen years of age.

Underneath the head was written, in a bold, though feminine hand, a single word, a name—the name of ROBERT.

Rufus Glendenning's features wore a puzzled expression as he studied this picture. He turned his head to look at her as the rustling of her dress announced her coming, and he saw a slight wrinkle of displeasure between her shapely eyebrows; but it was gone in a moment.

"You here?" she said.
 "Yes, Mrs. Yorke," he answered, with a courteous inclination of his head.

"Is this a fancy sketch?" he inquired.
 "What else should it be?" she replied, evasively.
 "It looks like a portrait."

She turned around upon him with a sudden quickness.

"Ah! that shot told," was his exultant thought.
 "What makes you think so?" she demanded.

"Because I have seen a boy in New York who is the very image of this picture," he answered, boldly.

She made a step toward him, and then checked herself; but she could not restrain the eager gleaming of her eyes. They told more than she was aware of.

"You have seen—in New York—a boy—like that?" she said, steadying the tones of her voice.

"I have," he answered, well satisfied with the effect he had produced, but framing his replies with great caution so as not to alarm her, and put her on her guard.

"Where?"
 "In Chatham street."

"Ah!"
 This was a sigh more than an exclamation. She turned again to the shelves and took a volume out, but he observed that she selected it hap-hazard. She turned to him again, holding the volume carelessly in her hand.

"Do you know this boy?" she continued.

He smiled, and replied:
 "I can hardly claim the honor of his acquaintance. I have seen, and exchanged a few words with him. I was attracted toward him by his free-and-easy bearing, and the singular attitude in which he had placed himself."

"How singular?" she asked, displaying an eager interest in these details.

Glendenning described the peculiar manner in which Fergus had patronized the boothblacks, and he thought that a faint smile flickered over Loriania's pale features as she listened to him.

"What is this boy's name, do you know?"
 "Yes; Fergus." He paused here designedly, and he saw her eyes gleam again.

He thought she would be disappointed in the

name, but she was not; at all events, he could not discover any sign of disappointment in her face.

"Fergus?" she repeated.

"Yes."
 "What other name?" she inquired; and he saw that she awaited his reply with anxiety.

"Fearnaught."
 This answer surprised her.

"Fearnaught—Fergus Fearnaught?" she questioned.

"Yes."
 "Strange," she murmured.
 "How strange?" he asked, insidiously.

"The name—does it not strike you so? It seems very singular to me," she answered, composedly.

"She is on her guard," reflected Glendenning, "but I am on the track of the secret, and I'll have it yet."

"Do you know where this boy lives?" continued Loriania.

"Yes."
 "Where?" she demanded, eagerly.
 "In Baxter street, with a poor widow-woman and her daughter."

"Do you know their name?"
 "I don't think Pickles mentioned the name," replied Glendenning, incautiously; "if he did, I have forgotten it; but he knows."

"Who is Pickles?" she questioned, quickly.
 "A lawyer friend of mine, who has an office in Center street, New York."

"How came he to know anything about this boy?"
 "I asked him to make some inquiries."

"Why should you interest yourself in this boy?" she questioned, in a suspicious manner, and with some show of displeasure.

He bit his lip vexedly, finding that she had led him into telling her more than he intended. A bold frankness was his best plan, he thought, and acting on this thought, he answered:

"I was led to do so by a strange resemblance that I saw in the boy's face."

"To whom?" she rejoined, icily.

"To yourself."
 She shrugged her shoulders coldly.

"Ah! you think you saw such a resemblance?" she said.

"I saw it then—I see it now."
 "Where?"
 "In this picture here."

"Indeed!"
 "It is enough like the boy to have been his portrait—and you are enough like the boy to have been his mother!"

Her limbs stiffened rigidly, and her pale face was as white as if it had been carved in alabaster.

"His mother!" she murmured, and the words had a hollow sound.

He was surprised at the effect he had produced.
 "Another chance shot, but it seems to have struck home," he told himself.

He resolved to follow up his advantage.
 "His mother!" he repeated, pointedly.

"Oh! surely you cannot think that?" she responded, huskily.

He saw her clutch at the back of the chair near which she was standing, as if a sudden weakness had seized upon her frame.

"You look ill," he cried; "pray be seated."

"It is nothing," she faltered; but she slid into the chair, and rested her right arm upon the table. He could see the powerful effort she was making to recover her composure.

"Shall I bring you a glass of water?" he inquired, solicitously.

"No, nothing—leave me," she answered. "This is a sudden lassitude—caused by the heat of the weather. It will soon pass away."

He stood a few paces from her, studying her pale face with an eager, wistful regard. Never had that face appeared to him more lovely than at that moment. But its beauty was that of some exquisite statue carved from coldest marble.

"Mrs. Yorke," he said, and his manner was most respectfully humble, "do you want a friend?"

She turned a surprised glance upon him, and he could see that she was fast recovering her composure.

"A friend?" she repeated, vaguely.

"Yes; an earnest and sincere friend," he continued; "one who would study your interests as if they were his own; one who would devote his life to you, smooth every care and trouble from your path, and prevent this secret, which you have so carefully guarded, from ever being known?"

"What secret?" she demanded, with a resumption of that haughtiness which had so often galled him.

"The boy."
 "Ah!"

"He is living in poverty, and poverty is next door to crime. Would you have him grow up to be one of the desperate characters in the city?"

She winced at this, as he thought she would, and her white lips were sternly compressed, but she did not make him any reply. Encouraged by her silence he proceeded:

"I can save him from such a fate. I can place him in a position where he can earn an honest living, and become, in time, an honorable member of society."

She did not receive this proposal in the manner he expected.

"Why should you do this?" she responded, coldly.
 "To serve you," he answered, significantly.

"How would it serve me?"
 The question perplexed him.

"You appeared to be interested in the boy."
 "Perhaps I am, but I think you have mistaken the cause."

"She was thoroughly herself again, calm, composed, and passionless.

He smiled deprecatingly. "I do not think so," he rejoined. "Do not fear to trust me—you can safely do so."

Her pale lips curled with a slight expression of scorn.

"I have nothing to fear, Mr. Glendenning," she replied, with hauteur. "I will tell you something that will surprise you. I have myself seen this boy."

He was indeed surprised, and his looks showed it. "You have seen him?" he cried.

"I have seen him."

"Lately?"

"Within a week."

"Ah!" he ejaculated, perplexedly.

"I, too, was struck by his face, for it reminded me of—my brother."

"Your brother?"

"Who died when he was only ten years of age. There is his picture drawn from memory."

"Robert—and not Fergus?" he cried, glancing at the inscription.

"I beg, Mr. Glendenning, that you will not interest yourself in this strange youth on my behalf; if you choose to befriend him let it be on your own account. Excuse me now, I must dress for dinner."

She inclined her head haughtily, and sweeping by him with majestic grace, left the library.

Never was a man more completely nonplussed than Rufus Glendenning. He stared at the door through which she had disappeared for several minutes in blank astonishment.

"The deuce!" he muttered, shaking off this trance of amazement. "Have I been on the wrong scent all the time? Can I be mistaken?" He deliberated over this. "No, no," he continued, confidently;

"I am positive that I am right. The game is to be a more difficult one than I imagined. She has taken the alarm and will confess nothing—if she can help it. But can she do so? That remains to be seen. I'll force it from her! I'll bend her haughty spirit, let it cost me what it will!"

CHAPTER XI.

PICKLES EXERTS HIMSELF.

THE evening of the same day that Lawyer Pickles received the visit from Rufus Glendenning, he called at the house in Baxter street.

"There's money in this case," was the conclusion he had arrived at. "That boy belongs to a good family—he's got it in his face—good blood will tell—and I must keep him in hand. There'll be a nice bill of costs at the end of it."

He found Fleda and her mother in a state of excitement. Fergus had not come home to his supper, and they were anxious about him.

"Pooh! that's nothing," said Pickles. "He's gone to the theater, perhaps. I will call again in the morning," he continued, addressing himself to the widow; "will you be kind enough to request Fergus to remain until I come? It will be to his interest to do so, I assure you."

The widow promised to do so, and the lawyer took his departure.

"What do you suppose he wants with Fergus, mother?" questioned Fleda, when Pickles was gone. "I'm sure I don't know," replied Mrs. Nandrus; "but I think he has found out something about Fergus's folks."

"Do you think so?" cried Fleda, surprisedly.

"Yes; I have always thought that Fergus had some folks, and that they were well off."

"Then why didn't they take care of him?"

"That is what I cannot explain, but perhaps this lawyer can. Who knows but what Fergus's friends, or relatives, are searching for him, and this lawyer is helping them? He wouldn't waste his time for nothing; lawyers never do."

This theme being once started, was discussed between them till quite late. They sat up until twelve o'clock at night anxiously watching for the return of Fergus, and then they reluctantly went to bed with the full conviction that something had happened to him.

They sat down to their breakfast the next morning with sorrowful hearts, which quite spoiled their appetites. The meal was more a form than anything else, and was speedily disposed of, and the table cleared away.

"Oh! where can Fergus be?" Fleda cried, for the twentieth time; and she heard the hall door close, and a step in the entry.

"Here he comes at last!" she exclaimed, joyfully.

She sprung to the door and threw it wide open, and, to her intense disappointment, found Mr. Effingham H. Pickles there.

"Oh! is it only you?" she cried, vexedly.

He smiled upon her, nodded his head, and entered the room in his usual unceremonious manner.

"Only me," responded Pickles, graciously. "But where's my bold Fergus? I do not perceive him here."

Fleda's face clouded again at the question.

"He hasn't come home yet," she answered.

Pickles was surprised.

"Not come home!" he rejoined. "What, out all night? But where was he going when he left—didn't he tell you?" inquired Pickles, quickly.

"Oh, no, he wouldn't," answered Fleda; and she proceeded with great volubility to give Pickles an account of Fergus's expedition in his old clothes, and the mysterious way in which he had set about it.

Pickles listened to her attentively, and did not put any questions, allowing her to exhaust her subject and her breath together.

"Where do you suppose he was going?" he inquired, when she paused breathlessly.

Before she could answer there came a knock at the door.

"Come in!" Pickles called out, as if he was the proprietor of the place.

The door opened and Clinton Stuyvesant entered.

"Oh! here's Clint!" cried Fleda, springing impulsively toward him. "Have you seen Fergus?"

Clinton looked bewildered at the question.

"Seen him? No; that's what I came for. Isn't he here?" he responded.

"No-o-o," replied Fleda, dismally. "And he's been away all night."

"Then he couldn't have found it," cried Clinton.

"What? What was he trying to find?"

"My portemonnaie, that I lost down the street."

"Ah! here's a clue!" exclaimed Pickles; "and I think I can follow it up." He had keenly noted Clinton's appearance and dress, and was very favorably impressed by them. "Who is this young gentleman?" he inquired of Fleda.

"He's a friend of Fergus's—and his name's Clint Stuyvesant."

"Clinton De Witt Stuyvesant," amended Clinton.

"Ah! a scion of one of our old Knickerbocker families," continued Pickles, in his most affable manner.

"Two or three of them," answered Clinton.

"Ah, yes—proud to know you, young sir. Permit me to introduce myself; my name is Effingham H. Pickles, attorney-at-law; perhaps you may have heard of me, as I have gained some little celebrity in criminal cases. I have gained several murder cases on the plea of insanity. Just give me the particulars of the loss of your portemonnaie, my young friend, and, possibly, I may be of some assistance in aiding you to recover it."

"That's so, as you are a lawyer, and I don't mind paying you for your trouble, if you are lucky enough to do so," responded Clinton.

"Do not charge yourself with the question of recompense, Mr. Stuyvesant," replied Pickles, with a condescending wave of his right hand. "I am personally interested in this matter—interested in the fortunes of that gallant youth, Fergus the Fearnaught, and shall be delighted—delighted to serve his friend. Come with me; let us constitute ourselves private detectives for the occasion, and see if we cannot get on the track of this Ragged Terry, for I think he knows something about your money."

"Do you know him?" inquired Clinton in some surprise.

"Oh, yes; I keep my eye on all these young scamps as prospective clients."

"Nice clients they are, I should say!" cried Clinton, laughingly. "I should not want any of that sort."

"We make more by rogues than we do by honest men; that's one of the beauties of the profession," replied Pickles, with a chuckle. "But, come along, and let us see what we can accomplish in the way of discoveries."

Pickles and Clinton Stuyvesant left the house together, and walked down the street a short distance in the hope of meeting Ragged Terry, but they did not succeed in doing so.

"He lives somewhere round here," said Pickles; "we must make some inquiries."

"But do you think we shall find him at home?" asked Clinton.

"Well, no, hardly, but we might get some idea of the streets he frequents on his begging expeditions," replied Pickles.

Just then a blowsy Irish woman came out of an alley with a pail of dirty water in her hand, which she splashed unceremoniously into the gutter.

Pickles darted toward her as she turned to retrace her steps, crying out:

"My good woman!"

She wheeled around suddenly and it appeared to Clinton that she was strongly tempted to throw her empty pail at the little lawyer's head.

"Well, what does ye want?" she snarled.

Pickles beamed one of his affable smiles upon her.

"We are looking for a lad known as Ragged Terry," he answered.

"Ragged Terry, is it?"

"Do you know where we could find him?"

"Bad cess to me if I do! I 'spect he's tuck up, and sint to the Island, mebbe, as he ought to have been, long ago—for I haven't set eyes on him since yesterday."

"Thank you; that will do," responded Pickles, politely.

The woman looked suspiciously at him and Clinton, and shook her head.

"It's no good ye want him for," she said, with conviction; and went back through the alley.

"Not much information there," observed Clinton, smilingly.

Pickles shook his head in a commiserating manner.

"Ah! the innocence of youth!" he rejoined. "If we could only retain it, but we cannot—we cannot. My dear young sir, that woman has told me all I wish to know."

"The deuce she has!" cried Clinton, surprisedly.

"She just has."

"Then you did not wish to know much."

Pickles chuckled at Clinton's perplexity.

"There's where my legal acumen comes in," he replied. "Ragged Terry has got your pocket-book, sure. Don't you see? He hasn't been home. Why not? Gone on a spree with the money, eh, ah?"

"That's so!" responded Clinton, with conviction; and the little lawyer rose in his estimation from that moment. "I never should have thought of that."

"Of course not; it's not to be expected that you should. Every man to his trade."

"What's the next move?"

"Down to the den of these young thieves. Ten chances to one we shall find them enjoying a regular blow-out at your expense."

"I am afraid we will not find much of the money left," replied Clinton, as they proceeded on their way.

"Well, I must confess our hope of recovering the money begins to look shady—quite sha-dy," rejoined Pickles. "But there's no help for that—if they've spent it we can't get it back, though we can send them up for it. I am more anxious, though, to find out what has become of our bold Fergus."

"So am I; for I fear he has got into trouble. The thought worries me because it was on my account."

"Never worry; life is too short; take it lively. Care killed the cat! If Fergus is in a scrape we'll get him out of it—we'll get him out—sure pop!"

CHAPTER XII.

A HIGH OLD TIME.

FLEDA attended to her business, as she called it, in a very absent manner after she had arranged her stand and wares at the customary corner.

She had been there about a quarter of an hour without having a customer, when her attention was attracted by the sound of boisterous laughter, and she saw Rowdy Rube, Johnny the Chicken, and Terry coming along the sidewalk toward her, but so changed in their appearance that she rubbed her eyes surprisedly, and wondered if it really could be they.

Each one of them was dressed in a new summer suit, and wore a calico shirt of a variegated pattern, with a fancy necktie, of a high color, and a new straw hat; and each one held a cigar in the corner of his mouth, with the nonchalance of an old smoker, with this difference, as Terry was the shortest boy he had contrived to get the longest cigar.

"Oh, my!" murmured Fleda to herself, as she perceived them. "Ain't they just a-goin' it? Clint Stuyvesant won't get much of his money back, I'm afraid."

The trio paused in front of Fleda's stand, and saluted her boisterously.

"Gimme a pint o' peanuts!" piped Terry, in his shrill treble. "I don't want no trust, neither."

He displayed a handful of change as he spoke.

"Let's buy her out—give the gal a lift!" cried Rowdy Rube.

"Won't take much to do that," said the Chicken. "Help yerself, boys, and I'll stand the damage."

The boys began to fill their pockets with Fleda's wares, vociferously demanding the damage as they did so. They cleaned her stand, and paid her the price she demanded without cavil; three princes of the blood royal could not have dispensed their money with a freer hand.

"Now you can go home," piped Terry, who seemed to be in a particularly happy frame of mind; "and don't say we never did nuthin' for yer."

"Oh, if I only knew where to find the lawyer and Clint!" thought Fleda, perplexedly. Then a new idea came suddenly into her brain. "Perhaps they know where Fergus is!" This reflection was instantly acted upon. "When did you see Fergus last?" she questioned, addressing the question in a general manner to the whole three.

"Why, don't yer know?" returned Terry. "Hain't yer heard?"

"What?" rejoined Fleda, gaspingly.

"He's sent up!" cried Rowdy Rube, exultingly.

"He won't get another chance to punch my head for some time to come."

Fleda looked, in a dismayed manner, from one boy's face to another, and both the Chicken and Terry nodded a confirmation of Rowdy Rube's words.

"Sent up!" stammered Fleda. "Oh! what do you mean? Sent up where?"

"To Blackwell's Island!" answered Terry, lugubriously.

"What for?"

"For fightin' with Micky Shea down on the pier at Dover street. A cop came up an' grabbed Ferg, but the other coves scooted, an' got away; an' Ferg was carried to the station-house, an' tuck to the Tombs in der mornin', an' der judge sent him up. That's what Archie Quale told me, and he seed Ferg tuck in."

Terry delivered this account volubly.

"Oh, the lawyer and Clint must know this right away," murmured Fleda.

"Where are you going now, boys?"

"Let's go to der Atlantic Garden an' have some lager beer and Switzer kase," said Terry.

"That's a go!" answered Rowdy Rube, approvingly.

"I'm convenient," added the Chicken.

The trio locked arms and walked away, swaggering along the sidewalk in a ludicrous manner.

"Oh, if they will only stop there long enough for me to find the lawyer and Clint, and send them there!" muttered Fleda to herself, as she hurried home with her stand.

She deposited it in the house, gave her mother a hurried account of what she had heard, to her great surprise and grief, and then went in search of lawyer Pickles and Clinton Stuyvesant.

Knowing that they would go to the Dover street pier, she thought her best plan would be to proceed there at once.

Fleda was fleet of foot, and she soon reached Chatham street. As she paused on the corner of Pearl street, waiting for the vehicles to pass, she saw Pickles and Clinton Stuyvesant coming up Pearl street on the opposite side.

With a glad cry, and at the risk of being run over

by a horse car, she bounded across the street, and ran to them, crying out:

"Oh, here you are! I've found you—oh, I'm so glad!"

"I can tell you where you can find three of the gang!" cried Flada, feeling some little exultation over the tidings she had to impart.

"You can?" exclaimed both Pickles and Clinton, in concert.

"Yes; and I can tell you where Fergus is also," and then she proceeded to recount her intelligence with all her natural vivacity.

"That's the way things always turn out," said Pickles. "You may search for days, weeks, months, or even years, for something without success, and then stumble on it by the merest accident. Let's go for the Atlantic Garden, Mr. Stuyvesant, and catch them young scamps."

"Shall I go with you?" asked Flada, in a tone that expressed a desire to accompany them.

"No, my cowslip!" answered Pickles. "You have done enough, and now you can go home. I'll soon get Fergus off the Island; that's easily fixed—error in the writ—*habeas corpus*—have him out! Come, my young friend, we will not stand upon the order of our going, but go at once!"

Flada crossed over again to Baxter street, and Pickles and Clinton Stuyvesant walked swiftly up Chatham street toward the Bowery.

When they came to the Atlantic Garden they passed through the saloon to the garden beyond. About midway in the garden, seated at one of the tables, they beheld the objects of their search. The description that Flada had given them of their change in costume enabled Pickles and Clinton to readily recognize the boys.

Each one had a mug of foamy beer, and a plate of bread and cheese before him. It was evident, to use one of their own phrases, that they were having "a high old time."

"There they are," said Pickles. "Nicely togged out, too, as the girl said."

"Yes, and at my expense," answered Clinton, laughingly.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Pickles. "They don't often stumble on such a windfall, and they are making the most of it. Now, then, we must surprise them, for they'll run if they have a chance. The two large ones are seated together, you see, and the little chap opposite. Now I'll steal behind them, and collar them, and you lay hold of the little one at the same time. I'll go down this passage, and you take the other. Keep cool—don't get excited—saunter down leisurely. They are so busy with their feast that I don't think they will notice us. Go it!"

Pickles's maneuver succeeded admirably.

"Ain't this jolly!" cried Rowdy Rube, replacing his mug upon the table after a hearty draught.

"Prime!" chirruped Terry.

"Slap bang!" exclaimed the Chicken.

"It was a lucky find that of yours, Terry," continued Rowdy Rube.

"He, he, he!" piped Terry. "The owner can afford to lose it, I guess. I wonder how he feels about now?"

"He feels you!" cried Clinton, clutching the diminutive scamp firmly by his right shoulder.

At the same moment Pickles secured Rowdy and the Chicken, pressing them down in their seats, and preventing them from rising.

The boys uttered a dismal howl in concert.

"Nabbed, by thunder!" muttered Rowdy Rube.

"I was a-goin' for ter bring it back, but they wouldn't let me," whined Terry.

"Bring what back?" demanded Pickles, sternly.

"This here swell cove's pocket-book."

"Oho! then you admit finding it," continued Pickles, gruffly.

"He found it—I didn't!" cried both Rowdy Rube and the Chicken in a breath.

"See here, now, we are going to make short work of you," said Pickles. "Stop your howling, or we'll turn you right over to the policemen we've got waiting outside."

This fiction told with great effect upon the boys. Terry tried to slip out of his seat, and hide under the table, but Clinton pulled him back.

"None of that," he cried.

"Oh—o-h!" moaned Terry. "I didn't mean for to go far to do it!"

"Choke him, my young friend, if he don't keep quiet!" said Pickles.

This command completely silenced Terry, and he remained limp and quiet.

"Now then, fork over!" continued Pickles; "that's a language you can understand. Fork over what you've left, and we'll let you off; I may promise that, eh, Mr. Stuyvesant?"

"Certainly," responded Clinton.

"We'll fork," cried Rowdy Rube, quickly; "but there ain't much left; we'll fork over, but don't send us to the Island."

"Disgorge! and quickly!" answered Pickles.

Rowdy Rube drew forth the portemonnaie and laid it on the table, and Terry and the Chicken placed their money beside it.

He opened the portemonnaie and inspected its contents.

"Hum—ah! four dollars and sixty-five cents. Dividend not heavy. Returned by Terry, whilom the ragged, one dollar and eighty-five cents; ditto the Chicken, who is in nice feather, two dollars and ten cents. Sum total: eight dollars and sixty cents."

"Is that all?" inquired Clinton.

"Every cent. The young ragamuffins have squandered nearly forty dollars, and have nothing but those clothes to show for it. Well, rascals, you have just had a high old time of it!"

The young scamps exchanged apprehensive glances as Pickles counted the money they had re-

turned, and when he made his remarks on the sum total they looked very blank.

"You said if we'd fork over you wouldn't send us up," urged Rowdy Rube; "and we've forked, fair and square, all there is left."

"Tarry yet a little, there is something else."

The three boys exchanged apprehensive glances.

"Wot is it?" inquired Terry.

"You told the little girl that keeps the peanut-stand something about Fergus, surnamed the Fear-naught?"

"We didn't do nuffin to him! It was Micky Shea, Archie Quale, and der rest on 'em!" cried Terry, quickly.

"That's so," chimed in Rube and the Chicken.

"Then he really has been sent to the Island?"

"Yes; the Black Maria tuck him away this morn-ing."

"That will do. You can go."

The boys availed themselves of this permission in quite a hasty manner. Evidently they had a great dread of the little lawyer.

"Are you going to try and get Fergus off the Island?" Clinton inquired, as they walked toward the door leading into the street.

"Instantly! I shall release that bold youth from durance vile, not perhaps in the exaggerated time designated as the 'twinkling of a bed-post,' but with all possible speed."

These words brought them to the corner of Canal street, where they paused.

Clinton extended his hand to the little lawyer with, "Say, old fellow, do you know I rather like you?"

Pickles grasped the proffered hand cordially.

"Delighted to hear it, Stuyvesant, junior—delighted!" he rejoined. "Should the cares of life at any time involve you in litigation I shall be glad to serve you in a professional capacity. Pray accept of one of my cards. 'When this you see, remember me.' Ta, ta!"

Pickles walked swiftly toward his office, and was very much surprised to see a lady standing in the doorway when he reached there.

This lady was dressed in a plain, dark walking suit, had on a black straw hat, from which depended a thick, green veil, which was drawn over her face, utterly concealing her features.

"Hum!" murmured Pickles, and his keen eyes surveyed her critically. "Here's a client for somebody; I wonder if it is for me? A lady, evidently, but does not wish to be known. Ah, hum, bah!"

Pickles raised his hat politely to the lady in the green veil, and with great suavity said:

"You appear to be looking for some one, madam?"

"I am," she responded. "A lawyer by the name of Pickles. Perhaps you could tell me where I could find him?"

"I can. *Ecce homo*—behold the man!"

"You are the gentleman?"

"The identical!"

"This is very fortunate!"

"Extremely so—ex-tremely! You wish to consult me?"

"I do."

"Very good. This way, if you please, madam; my office is on the first floor."

He ushered her into his office, and placed a seat for her.

"Some friend of yours is in trouble, eh?" he asked.

"Yes, a very dear friend, a youth—"

Pickles sat bolt upright in his chair.

"Fergus Fearnaught?" he interrupted, suddenly.

"Yes—yes—it is he!"

"Aha! I know who you are now, my lady, but I must not frighten you," Pickles admitted to himself. "Did Mr. Rufus Glendenning send you here?"

he inquired.

"No, no!" she answered, vehemently. "And he must not be told that I have been here."

These agitated words puzzled Pickles, but he rejoined promptly: "He will never know it from me, madam, if such is your desire."

"It is!—it is!" She was silent for a moment, and then resumed earnestly: "Oh! if I thought I could trust you!"

The lawyer was touched by this plaintive appeal. There was one soft place left in his heart which the law had not been able to harden.

"You must trust me, madam, if I am to do you any good," he replied.

His manner impressed Loriania favorably—the reader has conjectured who the veiled lady was, of course.

"You have been employed by Rufus Glendenning to make certain inquiries about a boy who is known as Fergus Fearnaught?" she said.

"Yes, madam, I have," was the prompt reply.

"Have you any idea what his *motive* was in urging you to these inquiries?"

"Not the slightest."

"Did you think—had you any reason to believe—that he knew the boy's true name and birth?" she resumed.

"He assured me that he did not. Mr. Glendenning was attracted to the boy, whom he met accidentally in the street, by a resemblance to some friend—or acquaintance of his, and he became very anxious to know all about the boy, and I instituted inquiries accordingly."

"And what did you discover?"

"Precious little. I learned that he was called Fergus Fearnaught—this last name being given on account of the spice of dare-devil in his nature, and a pretty strong spice it is, too—and that he lived with a poor widow and her daughter, whose name is Naudrus, in one of those wretched tenement houses on Baxter street, and that he did odd jobs about the street for a living."

"That's all?"

"That's all."

"Well?" cried Loriania, who had been an attentive listener.

"That is all I could tell Mr. Glendenning *then*, but now I could tell him much more."

"You must not!" she exclaimed, imperiously. "I will pay you double, treble, what he has agreed to."

"You 'outbid yon sordid huckster,' eh? He has not given me any retaining fee, so I am at liberty to decline the case."

Loriania took out her pocket-book.

"I will give you your retaining fee now," she said.

"You would serve the one who pays the best, would you not?"

"Certainly. For that are we lawyers; and I wouldn't be human if I didn't."

"You know just where to find this boy?" continued Loriania.

"I do; he's in a very safe place. He'll stop there until I go for him."

"Where is that?"

"Blackwell's Island."

"Heavens! What is he doing there?" exclaimed Loriania, excitedly.

"He got into a difficulty with some young thieves, and was sent up, by some mistake, but I can fix that as soon as I see the judge that sentenced him. We'll have him off of the Island in a jiffy!"

"We must. He must not stay there a day, an hour, longer than is necessary. Here is money. Expect me to-morrow."

Pickles gallantly opened the door for Loriania to pass out. Then he closed it after her, and took up the bank-bill she had left upon the table.

"Let me see what my retaining fee is," he said pleasantly. "Great Janus! Five hundred dollars!—a five-hundred-dollar bill! Phew! This is going to be a better case than I expected!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HORN SOUNDS.

FERGUS FEARNAGHT was not pleased with his quarters on Blackwell's Island. Nothing rankles more in the human breast than a sense of injustice, or oppression.

The boy knew that he was enduring an unmerited punishment, that he had not committed any crime, and that he was unjustly restrained of his liberty, and he resolved to regain that liberty as soon as an opportunity presented itself.

He believed that opportunity would soon be furnished him. He treasured in his memory the words whispered to him by the mysterious Mr. John Jackson, and at night he listened for the sound of the horn.

But the first night passed away and he did not hear it. He was greatly disappointed, for youth is always eager in its expectations.

He fancied that it must have sounded while he slept, for sleep had surprised him, during his vigil notwithstanding his determination to remain awake throughout the night.

"I will be more wakeful to-night," he resolved, as the shades of the second evening began to fall.

"It's so warm to-night that I shan't lock your door," the turnkey told him. "I guess you won't try to get away."

With this he winked at Fergus with his left eye in a very significant manner and retired. Fergus was not slow of apprehension. He had an idea that the horn would sound that night, and that the turnkey had been bribed to connive at his escape.

Darker grew the shades of night, and as the gloom gathered around him, Fergus's impatience increased. He saw that there was no prospect of a moon, a circumstance favorable to his escape; so he thought:

"Mr. Jackson will be more likely to come on a dark night than when the moon shines."

He watched and listened, and about ten o'clock, to his great delight, he heard the horn sound.

It was far out upon the river, but the night breeze bore the sound to his listening ears—the concerted signal, three notes; toot—toot—toot.

"There he is!" exclaimed Fergus delightedly.

"He's come for me. Now I'll just get out of this lively. Clever chap that turnkey to leave the door unlocked for me."

He stole gently out into the corridor, and found the door at the end of it unlocked. This led into the yard, but this yard was inclosed by an iron picket fence, and a sentinel was stationed there.

Fergus knew nothing of this fact until he was nimbly scaling the picket-fence, when he was loudly commanded to stop.

"Hold on, or I'll fire!" shouted the sentinel.

"I am holding on," replied Fergus, as he balanced himself on the iron spikes.

"Come back!"

"Ne'er a back!"

Bang went the musket, but Fergus had dropped on the other side of the fence as the gun flashed and the bullet passed harmlessly over his head. He gathered himself up and ran swiftly toward the beach.

"I shall have to swim for it!" he thought, as he sped along at a rapid rate.

Toot—toot—toot, sounded the horn, out upon the bosom of the river, the sound coming strangely and mysteriously from the gloom that gathered like a pall over the face of the water.

The alarm was loudly sounded behind Fergus, but he paid no heed to it. He directed his course by the sound of the horn, reached the river's brink, cast off his prison shoes, and plunged boldly into the water.

An excellent swimmer, he increased the distance between himself and the shore rapidly, never stopping to look back but striking forward with brave determination.

When he thought he had got out of musket-range

of the shore, he paused, began to tread water, and looked back. He could see the lanterns gleaming along the shore, and he knew that the keepers and guards were looking for him; but he had an idea it was more for form's sake, and to keep their record clear, than from any anxiety to recapture him.

"There they are, and here I am, and where's the boat?" he said.

Toot-toot-toot, sounded the horn, away to his left.

"There it is! I wonder if I can't bring it up to me?"

He put two fingers of his right hand in his mouth and produced that shrill whistle that boys so well understand; but in that gloom, and in that place, it sounded like the cry of some water bird.

The horn immediately answered it, which showed that Mr. John Jackson had heard and understood the signal.

Fergus began to swim again in the direction of the sound. Soon he heard the movement of oars, and then the form of a boat came through the gloom.

"Fergus!" called out a voice, that he recognized at once as belonging to Mr. John Jackson.

"Here!" he answered.

"Good boy! you're the ticket, every time. Give me your hand. Now then!"

Fergus extended his hand to Jackson, who slid his hand down his arm and gripped him by the shoulder, and then lifted him with ease into the boat, saying:

"There you are, my hearty!"

"Thank you," replied Fergus.

"You're welcome. Didn't I tell you I'd do it?"

"You did—and you have," rejoined Fergus, laughingly.

Mr. John Jackson joined him with a grim kind of a chuckle.

"When I say I'll do a thing, you can just bet your bottom dollar it's got to come. Socco never went back on his word yet!"

"Who's Socco?" inquired Fergus, bewildered by this allusion.

Jackson chuckled again.

"That's me," he responded.

"I thought your name was Jackson?"

"So it is—t'other's a pet name that my friends have given me—John Jackson, *alias* Socco. See?"

A deep-drawn sigh came from the stern of the boat, and Fergus, turning, became conscious that there was another person in the boat, for he could dimly see a human form in the stern.

"Hello! got a friend here?" he cried, with his usual bluntness.

"Yes, that's a particular friend of mine," answered Socco—to give him his favorite name—with a chuckle; "I'll give you an introduction, but shake those prison duds first. Here's a suit of clothes I brought for you."

This consideration surprised Fergus. He could not account for the interest that Mr. John Jackson, *alias* Socco, took in his welfare.

"You are very kind," he exclaimed.

"Oh! you'll pay me back some time," answered Socco, with another chuckle. "I can put you up to a dodge where we can make lots of money."

Fergus thought he heard another sigh in the stern of the boat, but he was not sure of it. It was evident that it did not reach Socco's ears, for he continued his discourse.

"Shed those striped togs and pitch them overboard," he went on. "You won't have no further use for them, I reckon. Do you want a little light on the subject? I've got a lantern here."

"Won't they see it from the shore?"

"Not much—not the way we'll fix it. Turn on the glim, Moll."

A gleam of light was shed upon Fergus and Socco by the person in the stern, who held a dark lantern. This was done by pushing back the shade.

Fergus stripped off his prison suit and cast it into the river, and then dressed himself in the suit that Socco had provided. He had selected a suit as near Fergus's size as he could guess, and he had not made a bad one.

The whole thing was complete from head to foot; cap, coat, vest, pantaloons, shirt, necktie, stockings and shoes.

"That's an odd name your friend has got," said Fergus, as he dressed himself.

"Eh, odd, how?"

"Moll—queer name for a man."

"A man—oh, yes!" Socco laughed here quite heartily. "Yes, yes, it's a queer name for a man."

Fergus wondered what he saw so funny about it.

"How do they fit?" inquired Socco, when Fergus was attired.

"A trifle large, but they'll do."

"Better be too large than too small—give you a chance to grow, you know."

All this time the boat had been drifting slowly with the tide. Socco now stepped past Fergus, and took the lantern from the person in the stern, then he stepped back to Fergus, and turned the light of the lantern upon his friend.

"See here, Ferg, my boy!" he cried. "Here's Mister Moll; take a good look at him!" And he chuckled pleasantly.

Fergus looked curiously at Socco's friend, and he was greatly surprised when he saw a slight figure and a pale face, framed with dark hair, a pair of large eyes, which had a staring, mournful look, and eyebrows of such inky blackness that they seemed to have been painted upon the pale face and not to have grown there naturally.

"Why, he's only a boy!" exclaimed Fergus.

"He isn't a boy, returned Socco, who seemed to be enjoying a splendid joke.

"Isn't he?" rejoined Fergus, dubiously.

"He isn't a he, but a she."

"A she!"

"It's my wife, Ferg—my wife, Mary, though I oftener call her Moll."

"But why have you dressed her up like a boy?" demanded Fergus, surprisedly.

"She always dresses that way when she goes on an expedition with me; it makes it handier for her to move round," answered Socco. "She don't make a bad-looking boy, does she?"

"She looks nice."

Socco gave the lantern back to the disguised woman.

"She's been as true as steel to me," he said; "and I guess, Ferg, that you are a boy that wouldn't go back on a pal, particularly when he's been a good friend to you."

"I never go back on anybody."

"That's what I thought. I set you down as true blue the first time I clapped my eyes on your good-looking face. Now, just squat yourself forward there, and I'll take the oars. I always row and she steers. I let the boat float while you was fixing, 'cause the tide was taking us in the right direction."

Socco bent to the oars and sent the boat swiftly forward. Sitting in the bow of the boat Fergus gazed over the dark surface of the water and wondered what his strange companions were, and whither they were going. His brain was in quite a whirl over the singular events of the night.

But there were stranger things yet to happen before that eventful night ended.

Fergus watched the lights glimmering from the shore, and he observed other lights out in the stream which he knew were lanterns attached to the rigging of vessels lying at anchor.

"There's a vessel right in our way—look out or you'll run into her!" he cried, warningly.

"How do you know?"

"See the light there hanging to the yard-arm."

Socco rested on his oars.

"Show the glim, Moll," he said; and a flash of light was thrown over the water, revealing the hull of quite a large vessel.

"Is it the one?" continued Socco.

"Yes," answered Moll.

"All right—douse the glim."

The shade of the dark lantern was closed again.

"Now for it," said Socco, and he began to row again; but Fergus observed that he did so in a very cautious manner.

Again his curiosity got the better of him.

"Are you going to the vessel?" he questioned.

"Yes."

"Why—what for?"

"Hush! don't breathe a word above a whisper now. These jobs are risky sometimes. Keep as still as a mouse when a cat is watching for him."

"But what are you going to do?" asked Fergus, perplexedly.

He began to think there was something wrong in this mysterious proceeding.

"Just you keep quiet, and you'll see, my boy," answered Socco, with a chuckle.

The boat containing Socco, Fergus and the disguised woman, whom this singular man called "Moll," and had proclaimed to be his wife, glided up to the dark hull of the vessel, cautiously guided by Socco, who shipped his oars without noise, as the contact became imminent, and, rising from his seat, fended off the boat from the vessel's hull.

As he did this, Moll flashed the light of the dark lantern along the vessel's side, and disclosed a rope hanging down from the deck.

Socco uttered a smothered exclamation of satisfaction as he beheld it.

"Here we go!"

Socco drew himself up by the rope and disappeared over the bulwark.

"What is he going to do?" Fergus asked Moll.

"Don't you know?" she rejoined.

"Of course I don't; if I did I wouldn't ask," returned Fergus, rather impatiently.

"Then why are you here with him?"

This question increased Fergus's impatience.

"Don't you know why I am here?" he demanded.

"You were in the boat when I came; you ought to know where I came from and how I got here."

"I do. You came from the Island. What were you sent up for—stealing?"

"No, I wasn't!" replied Fergus, indignantly. "I never stole anything in my life, and I don't mean to. But I tell you what I think—I think there is some stealing going on to-night."

"I thought you knew it. He told you he was going on an expedition. Don't you know who he is, and what kind of expeditions he goes on?"

"No, I don't know anything about him, only that his name is John Jackson, and that he lives on the top floor of our house in Baxter street. Do you live there with him?"

"Part of the time, but we have another house in Harlem. It is not safe for us to live too long in the same place. We have to keep dodging the police."

"Look here, I want to get out of this!" cried Fergus, quickly. "I've been juggled once for keeping bad company, and I've had about enough of it. I'm not going to join the river pirates—he's one of them, I know, by what you've said."

"He is the most notorious of them all. He told you his name—Socco; he was not joking."

Fergus began to feel decidedly uncomfortable.

"I have heard of getting out of the frying-pan into the fire," he said, "and it 'pears to me that this is something like it. I guess I would have been as well off if I had staid on the Island."

This conversation was suddenly brought to an abrupt close by the report of a pistol, sounding faint and muffled, as if proceeding from the cabin of the vessel. This report was followed by three others in rapid succession, thus plainly denoting that a revolver was being used.

"Oh, heavens!" cried Moll. "He is discovered, and there is murder doing!"

"Shall I push off?" exclaimed Fergus. "I know how to row!"

"Not yet—not yet!" she answered, in a voice of command. "We must wait and see. He may escape—he would never suffer himself to be taken alive—that I know. Be ready to move the moment I tell you."

There came a hoarse, gasping whisper down to them over the bulwark.

"Moll! Moll! are you there?"

"Yes, here—are you hurt?"

"Yes, some, but I guess I can get down. Bud, lend us a hand."

They both assisted him to descend into the boat, and he sunk down in the bottom, resting his head in Moll's lap. The effort to gain the boat had exhausted his strength.

"Row, row, row for your life, for all our lives!" cried Moll, energetically.

Fergus obeyed her promptly. He pushed the boat away from the vessel, and seizing the oars, began to row with all his strength and skill.

"There they go!" was shouted from the deck of the vessel, and shots rung out startlingly upon the night air.

"Pull, boy, pull—faster—faster!" cried Socco, gaspingly.

The sound of the oars directed the aim of those upon the vessel's deck, and a bullet whizzed by Fergus's left ear and struck in the bow.

Socco rose up to his knees, evidently with the design of taking the oars from Fergus, but as he did so a bullet struck him in the back, and with a gasping cry he fell backward into Moll's outstretched arms. The career of the river thief seemed over.

Fergus ceased rowing.

"Is he hit?" he inquired, anxiously.

"Row, boy, row!" cried Moll, quickly. "Never mind him—save yourself, save me!"

Fergus bent to the oars again with renewed energy. Two more pistol-bullets whistled over his head. He could see the flashes of the pistols, his face being toward the vessel as he rowed.

"Oh, blaze away!" he shouted, defiantly. "Blaze away if you like it!"

"Hush!" she cried, warningly. "Have you no fear?"

"Not enough to worry me. What's the use of being funky. That won't help us any."

"Brave boy!" exclaimed Moll.

Fergus did not reply; he found he needed all his breath for the tremendous effort he was making with the oars. The boat seemed to fairly leap through the water, and in less time than it takes me to tell it they were out of pistol-range, and the ship's lantern gleamed dimly in the distance.

"Phew! but that was a breather—wasn't it!" he exclaimed. "How is he now?"

"He is dead—he is dead!" cried Moll, huskily.

"Are you sure?" questioned Fergus, in a hoarse whisper.

"Yes; shot through the heart, I think."

"Dead?"

"Yes, thank God for it!" she exclaimed, fervently.

Fergus was greatly surprised. He wondered, in a vague kind of manner, if all wives uttered a prayer of thanksgiving when their husbands died.

"Are you glad?" he asked, in his usual blunt fashion.

"Yes; why should I seek to conceal it?" she answered. "I know what is passing in your mind, but you do not know this man as well as I do, and it is well for you that you have been spared that knowledge. I thank God that I have been freed from a life of crime, and that you are spared entering upon one."

"Good for you!" cried Fergus, encouragingly.

"Your heart is all right if you have had hard luck. But, what are you going to do with him? Take him ashore?"

"No, no! we should be arrested as his accomplices. We must throw him overboard."

"What, to feed the fishes?"

"What else can we do? If the harbor police should find us with him, what could we say?"

"It wouldn't make much difference what we said, they'd put their own meaning to the affair, and then it would be Sing Sing instead of Blackwell's Island. You are right, Misses Moll; we must sock Mister Socco overboard."

"How fortunate I am in having such a boy as you are with me to-night! Now, then, I will help. Be careful or we may upset the boat."

They slid Socco over the gunwale of the boat, and he sunk with a sullen plunge into the water.

"He is gone—may Heaven have mercy on his soul!" exclaimed Moll.

"Now, take your oars again, and let us go ashore. The air is full of rain; let us get ashore before the storm begins. What is your name?" she continued, as Fergus obeyed her.

"Fergus Fearnaught."

"You are well named. Fergus, you have saved my life to-night, and you will always have a firm friend in Mary Jackson!"

CHAPTER XIV.

ANXIOUS INQUIRIES.

LAWYER PICKLES, sitting in his office awaiting the coming of Lorian Yorke, was considerably surprised by the unceremonious opening of his door and the entrance of Rufus Glendenning.

"How does our case come on?" he asked.

"The boy, Fergus Fearnaught?"

"Yes."

"Swimmingly."

"That's good!"

"I think I am in a fair way to discover his mother."

"You do?" cried Glendenning, with animation.

Pickles winked at him significantly.

"Ah, yes, as if you didn't know!" he cried, playfully. "Is there no fair lady, among your circle of distinguished friends, whom this boy greatly resembles, eh, hab, ah?"

"Lorania Yorke!" answered Glendenning, involuntarily, and thus falling into the trap that Pickles had laid for him.

Pickles could scarcely conceal his satisfaction.

"Yorke—Yorke?" he said, musingly. "That's one of your firm, isn't it?"

"Yes, Elliott Yorke. He was appointed my guardian in my infancy."

"This Lorania is his wife, eh?" continued Pickles, pursuing the investigation with avidity. "Who was this aforesaid female before she married Mr. Elliott Yorke?"

"The daughter of old Garret Van Amringe of Bergen Hill. The old man speculated, and Elliott Yorke held mortgages for cash advanced. I have always thought that Lorania married him to save the old man from utter ruin. At all events, the marriage settled the business by giving all to Elliott Yorke."

"Hum! these particulars will be of great service to me, Mr. Glendenning," said Pickles. "I think I shall be able to make a very clean case of it now. This Mrs. Yorke is very handsome, is she not?"

"Beautiful as an angel!" replied Glendenning, fervently.

Pickles smiled significantly.

"You would kind of like to get a hold on her, wouldn't you?" he asked, artfully.

Glendenning rose, excitedly to his feet, crying:

"You just get that hold for me, Pickles, and I'll make your fortune!"

Pickles smiled and nodded his head.

Glendenning counted out a number of bills and placed them on the table before Pickles.

"There's a hundred dollars," he said; "but I'll make it a thousand if you can obtain for me any information that will bring about a separation between Elliott Yorke and his wife. Now I'm off, but I'll look in again in a day or two."

So saying, Rufus Glendenning took his departure.

"Oh! the pernicious cat!" exclaimed Pickles, as the door closed upon him. "But I'll scoop in this hundred dollars, notwithstanding my opinion of him. All's fish that comes to my net."

He gathered up the money and put it away in his pocket-book.

"But it's no use, my gentle Rufus!" he continued. "The lady has seen me and gone five better, and I think she is likely to prove the better client of the two. I'm afraid I shall have to play the odds on you."

The door opened and Lorania entered, attired and veiled as on her previous visit. He placed a chair for her with polite alacrity, and she sunk into it.

"Rufus Glendenning has just left you," she said, excitedly. "I was coming toward your office on the opposite side of the way when I saw him approaching your door; so I watched and waited until I saw him leave."

"A very judicious movement on your part, Mrs. Yorke—very, indeed."

"You know me?" she cried, starting to her feet.

"Did you tell him that I had been here?"

"By no means, madam. That would be a breach of professional confidence that nothing could tempt me to be guilty of. On the contrary, he told me who you were."

"Indeed?" Lorania resumed her seat and threw back her veil. "There shall be no concealments between us. I will trust you, and, as I have already told you, it will be greatly to your interest to serve me faithfully."

"I will, madam."

Hereupon Pickles recounted all that had transpired between himself and Rufus Glendenning.

"Fool!" exclaimed Lorania scornfully. "does he think that if I separated from Elliott Yorke I would wed with him? He is mad to think so! but Mr. Rufus Glendenning does not cause me any anxiety. I have something of more importance to think of. Have you obtained the boy's release?"

"He escaped last night, aided and abetted by some one outside, who was probably waiting in a boat for him, for our bold Fergus, with that fearlessness which is so characteristic of him, jumped in the river and swam away."

"Heavens! he might have been drowned!"

"I think not, for he can swim like a duck, and there was a boat waiting for him, as I said. This much I could learn from the officials there, but not who the outside party was; they were too close for me there."

"He may have returned to his former home!" cried Lorania, quickly.

"I thought of that, madam, and I made a call there on my return from the Island; but neither the woman nor the girl had seen him."

Lorania wrung her hands together with a piteous action.

"Oh, he is drowned—he is drowned!" she moaned.

"Banish such a thought from your mind," said Pickles, reassuringly. "I am confident that he is alive—and kicking, to use a popular phrase, and we shall soon find him."

"But why has he not gone to those people with whom he lived?" urged Lorania.

"For the simplest of all reasons; the boy does not know anything about his discharge; he looks upon himself as an escaped convict, and he don't want to be caught, don't you see? and so he will lay low for the present."

Lorania's face brightened at this explanation.

"You are right," she said. "Here is my card. When you find the boy, bring him to me there."

Pickles took the card, mechanically.

"Bring him to you, there!" he rejoined, surprisedly.

"She smiled at his perplexity."

"With all your keenness, you are at fault, Mr. Pickles," she inquired. "Have you not discovered why I am so much interested in this boy?"

Pickles inclined his head, deprecatingly.

"Madam, it is not for me to form any opinion concerning your motives," he replied. "It is enough for me to carry out your instructions, and receive such confidence as you choose to bestow upon me. In due time, I have no doubt, you will tell me all that is necessary for me to know."

"You shall know it—all the world shall know it—when the proper time comes!" she exclaimed; and drew her veil over her face, preparatory for her departure.

He opened the door for her and she passed out.

Lorania Yorke walked down Center street toward the City Hall Park, intending to cross it to Broadway. By the time she reached the corner of Chambers street, she became conscious that something unusually exciting was occurring in the city.

People were running about in a hurried and agitated manner. Little squads of police dashed swiftly past her. The crowd surged in the direction she was going as if some great sight awaited them, and they were anxious to behold it.

Was it a fire, or what? She did not hear any alarm bell sounding, nor were there any engines in the street.

The crowd increased in density around her, and she was pushed forward in the throng. She could not have extricated herself from it now if she had desired to do so.

A feeling of alarm seized upon her. This wild and excited crowd, that bore her along with it, as one is swept onward by a swift and irresistible current, filled her breast with dread.

Danger of some sort appeared to be imminent. But what could it be?

"The bulls! the bulls!" she heard the men shouting around her.

What could they mean? If she had been crossing a field in the country she might have understood such a cry, and taken it as a warning. But, surely, there could be no wild bulls in the streets of New York!

But there was, though, and the wildest kind of bulls.

Eight large Texan steers, that had been brought to the city by an Erie Railroad ferry-boat, maddened by starvation and thirst, when they were landed at the foot of Chambers street became uncontrollable.

Eluding their drovers and frenzied by the yells and shouts of an idle crowd of men and boys, that always collects on the slightest provocation in the streets of New York, and the shrieks of terrified women and children, who, returning from pleasure-journeys in the country, thronged the neighborhood of the ferry-house, the infuriated steers, with blazing eyes, foaming mouths, tossing their horns threateningly, and lashing themselves with their tails, dashed up Chambers street toward West Broadway.

Lorania attempted to fly across the open space, when one singled her out and pursued her.

Fright deprived her of strength, and she sunk down upon her knees, giving herself up for lost, and awaiting her fate with the numbness of despair.

At that dread moment a boy sprang lightly before her, holding in his right hand a gleaming bayonet which he had snatched from a soldier in the crowd.

The boy's hair was so short that you could not see any of it beneath his cap, and he had a white face, with a vivid red flush in either cheek, and a bright blue eye. His bearing was utterly dauntless.

The mob shouted encouragingly to him.

"It's Ferg Fearnaught!" cried Rowdy Rube.

"And he's a goin' fur der bull!" exclaimed Terry. These two youths had followed the steer to the park, and were still taking a look at "the fun."

The steer seemed to be very much astonished to find himself confronted by so slight an antagonist.

He paused with erected head and distended nostrils and glared at him.

Fergus bounded swiftly forward and plunged his weapon in the steer's breast.

The animal sprang toward him, blood streaming from the deep wound, but Fergus warily leaped aside, and, as the steer passed him, buried the sword bayonet in his side.

He was fortunate enough to reach a vital part, for the steer staggered confusedly for a few moments and then fell over upon its side, dead.

The police formed a circle about the carcass and emptied their revolvers into it, and the crowd hacked it with knives, Rowdy Rube and Terry participating in this singular amusement with great glee.

Fergus resigned the sword bayonet to the owner, who came just then to claim it, and turned his attention to Lorania, who remained upon her knees with her face buried in her hands.

He raised her gently up, and supported her toward a bench, she yielding to his direction passively.

"You're safe, ma'am," he said. "The bull's killed."

She shivered, and then looked at him, saying:

"My brave youth, to whom do I owe—Heavens! it is he—my own—my boy!—my boy!"

And she caught Fergus in her arms and pressed him wildly to her heart.

Fergus was very much astonished to find himself so affectionately embraced, but he attributed this action to the lady's gratitude.

"Oh! how short they've cut your hair!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, that's the Island clip," replied Fergus, laughingly.

"Had you waited until to-day you would have received your discharge."

"Yes, I know it now, but I didn't know it then; I would have waited if I had."

"When did you learn it?"

"About twelve o'clock to-day. I was stopping with Mary Jackson at her house in Harlem, and I thought that Mrs. Nandrus and Fleda might be anxious about me, and so I asked her to go down and see them and tell them that I was all right. When she came back she said Lawyer Pickles had been there after me, and said he'd got my discharge. Clever in him, wasn't it? So I just traveled down home, and I tell you, they was glad to see me again, Fleda, particularly."

"The little girl?"

"Yes; so after I had taken a lunch with her, I just sailed out for a bit of a walk, and I tell you, the boys looked at me, for they hardly knew me with my hair so short. It felt kind of good, though, to think I could walk round and not have to dodge the cops. I'm going to call on Pickles and thank him—though I don't know why he should trouble himself about me."

"It was at my request."

"Yours?" cried Fergus, surprisedly.

"Yes; look at me. Do you think you ever saw my face before?"

Lorania put this question eagerly, and Fergus scanned her features closely in compliance with the request.

"Yes, I do remember you now," he replied.

"You do?" she cried, in a gratified manner. "You do?"

"Yes, it was you that was in the carriage on Broadway; and sung out 'That's the boy—stop him!'"

"Yes—yes!"

"What did you want to stop me for?"

"Oh, Fergus! can you not guess?"

The boy shook his head.

"No, I'm blest if I can!" he answered.

"Do you not feel your heart yearn toward me?"

He gazed earnestly in her face.

"You are a nice looking lady," he said, "and I feel as if I could like you."

"Like me!—you must love me!" she exclaimed.

"Why must I?" he inquired, quite bewildered by her manner.

"Why? Because, Fergus, I am your mother!"

"My mother?"

"Your mother!" she repeated; and again she clasped him to her heart.

Despite his bewilderment and astonishment her words carried conviction to the boy's heart.

"You must be—you must be," he murmured, pleasantly; "and oh! what a nice mother you are!"

"Heaven has been good to me in permitting me to find you after all these years," cried Lorania, gratefully. "Now, Fergus, you must go home with me."

"What, right away?"

"Yes—yes."

"I'd like to go home and tell Mrs. Nandrus and Fleda first. They'll be anxious about me if I'm not home for supper."

Lorania reflected for a moment.

"Perhaps that would be best," she said. "I must explain all to Elliott now, and arrange my plans for the future. Will you not come to me this evening if I tell you where to come?"

"Yes," answered Fergus, promptly.

She took out one of her cards and gave it to him. He read off the inscription readily, somewhat to her surprise.

"Mrs. Elliott Yorke, Bergen avenue."

"You can read?" she said.

"Oh, yes."

"Who taught you?"

"Fleda."

"She has been a good friend to you?"

"Tip-top!" Fergus referred to the card that he held in his hand. "Is this your name?" he inquired.

"Yes—my married name."

"And is my name Fergus Yorke?"

"No, my boy; your name is Robert Fergus Armytage."

Fergus could not understand this at all.

"How can that be?" he questioned.

"It was your father's name; but all shall be explained to you in good time. It seems that in some way you lost your first name and were called by your middle name only. I must go home now. Will you walk to the ferry with me?"

"Of course I will."

"As we go along I can tell you how you can find the house in which I live."

They proceeded out of the park together and crossed Broadway. The excitement caused by the wild steers had died away, and the street had resumed its usual aspect.

They proceeded uninterruptedly to the Courtlandt ferry, and here Lorania gave Fergus some car and ferry tickets, charged him not to disappoint her in coming that evening, kissed him, and they parted.

Fergus hurried, in high glee, to the old house in Raxter street to break the strange tidings to Mrs. Nandrus and Fleda. When Lorania reached her home she sought her husband immediately.

"I have done you a great wrong, Elliott," she began, and her voice quavered, despite all her efforts to steady it; "and it was all the more grievous because you have loved me so well."

There came a pleasurable gleam into his eyes.

"You know, then, how much I have loved you," he said; "how much I still love you!"

"I do; and you should have been apprised before of what I am about to tell you now."

He tried to smile, but the effort was a faint one.

"Is it something very terrible?" he asked.

"It was a deceit—and a deceit should never be practiced upon an honorable man."

"What was this deceit?"

"I was not the young and inexperienced girl you took me to be; I had been a wife before."

"Married! and your first husband—he was not—

is not alive?" he inquired huskily.

"Oh, no! it is not so bad as that," she replied quickly. "He was dead when I married you."

He breathed a deep sigh of relief.

"You were a widow?" he said.

"Yes."

He could smile now without an effort.

"Really, there is nothing so very terrible in this confession of yours. If I had known this at the time I should have wedded you all the same. What was your motive for this concealment?" he asked, pleasantly.

"I had no motive. I was but a passive instrument in my father's hands," she answered. "The story of my first marriage can be briefly told."

"I should like to hear it."

"When I was but seventeen I made the acquaintance of a young man named Robert Fergus Armytage. I thought him very handsome, and I fell in love with him. He was but a clerk on a humble salary. This infatuation culminated in an elopement, for I knew my father would never give his consent to our union; but I made it a condition with Robert that he should take me away from my home, and that our marriage should be kept a secret from every one but my father. I made a pretense of visiting a relative in Philadelphia, and went to New York with Robert, where we were married at a minister's house, the members of his family being the only witnesses. I wrote to my father telling him what I had done, for I did not dare to face him with the intelligence, and received a bitter letter in reply, in which he cast me off forever. But my heart was happy in the choice it had made, and I derided his anger."

"It was a rash and ill-advised step," remarked Elliott Yorke.

"I found it so," she answered, "and it inflicted upon me long years of suffering. Robert was confident that he could provide amply for the future, and life was pleasant with him, for my love increased rather than diminished. I think he cherished a hope my father would forgive us in time—I was confident he would; but I was proud as he was, and I never wrote to him again until after my boy was born."

"A boy! I see—that portrait, then—the resemblance! He is your son?"

"He is. I wrote to my father of his birth, but the reply I received was more bitter than the one before."

"He was an implacable man."

"I found him so to my sorrow. A year passed away. I lived in the greatest seclusion, scarcely venturing abroad, for I shrunk from meeting any former friends. There came a depression in business; Robert lost his situation; our means became straitened, and I resolved to appeal personally to my father. I concealed this resolution from Robert, knowing he was of a haughty spirit, despite his poverty, for fear he would restrain me. I dressed myself for the visit, and leaving my child sleeping in his cradle, hurried to my father's house."

"My father received me coldly, but listened calmly to all I had to tell him, and then bade me follow him. He led me to a chamber in the upper story, and I, thinking he was about to relent, was induced to enter it. The key was turned upon me—I was a prisoner. On the third day of my confinement he made me this proposal: 'Write to this man that you call husband,' he said, 'these words: *Accept of the conditions proposed; it is my wish.*' I was about to refuse, when he added: 'Do this, or I will have you placed in a mad-house.' I was terrified into compliance. I wrote the words and signed them, and he went away exultingly."

"The next day he brought me a letter from Robert. It contained these words: 'You have basely deserted me and your child, and so you will never see either of us again.' Then I felt my brain reel as if I was really going mad. This blow gave me a brain fever and it was months before I could comprehend what had happened. When I recovered, another shock awaited me. I was told that Robert Armytage had been killed by the cars at one of the street crossings. I would not believe it until they brought me the proofs of his death, which had been obtained by Mr. Jelliffe, my father's lawyer. This gave me a relapse of sickness, and when I once more arose from my bed, I was more like a walking statue than a living woman. I was told that my marriage was a secret, and must be kept so to save the proud name of Van Amringe from disgrace, and I was also told that I must receive you as a suitor to save my father from ruin. I consented passively, for I had been given to understand that my boy, smitten by scarlet fever, had died before his father."

"I can understand your coldness, and your smileless face, now. You were sorely afflicted. When did you discover that your boy still lived?"

"Not until after my father's death. A memorandum among his papers excited my suspicion and I questioned Mr. Jelliffe, and he admitted to me that the child did not die at that time, but had been carried away by his father, when he had been made to believe that I had so cruelly deserted him, and had been placed in some one's keeping. The search I instituted for him gave no results, as I looked for him in the country when he was in New York. An accident revealed him to me."

Lorania related then how she had seen Fergus on Broadway when riding in her carriage, described her search for him (but she did not allude to the information afforded her by Rufus Glendenn—and which had been of so much service to her) and her adventure with wild steers.

Elliott Yorke listened to her attentively, and when she had finished he exclaimed:

"A brave youth! You must be proud of him, Lorania."

"Oh! I am—I am!"

"I will provide for him in the future. He is my stepson, but he shall be more than that; I will adopt him as my own son, and he shall take the place in my affection of those we have lost."

"Oh! Elliott, how shall I ever repay you for all your goodness?" she cried, while grateful tears dimmed the luster of her eyes.

And she fell weeping on his breast.

They were disturbed by a ring at the door-bell.

"It is he!" cried Lorania, "my boy, come!"

The story of Fergus Fearnaught is told. A few more words will sum all up.

The plans arranged for him by Lorania and Elliott Yorke were carried out, and he went to Columbia College with Clinton Stuyvesant in due time, and there he made such rapid progress that one and all predicted that in years to come the world would honor the name of Fergus, once called Fearnaught.

THE END.

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